

T W E L V E
S E R M O N S

P R E A C H ' D O N
Several Occasions.

By *RICHARD LUCAS*, D. D.

late VICAR of *St. Stephen Coleman-Street*,
and P R E B E N D A R Y of *Westminster*.

V O L. II.

The T H I R D E D I T I O N.

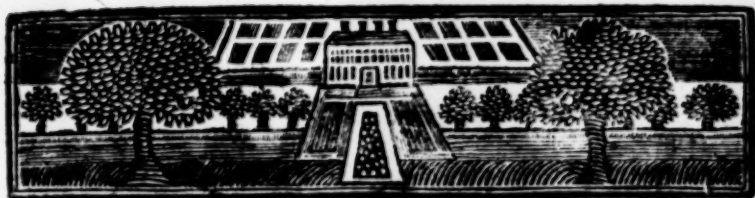
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S E R M O N I.

Scripture the Word of God.

1 Theff. II. 13.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye receiv'd the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye receiv'd it not as the Word of Men, but as it is in Truth the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

WE are fallen into those Times which our Saviour prophesy'd of, *Luke xviii. 8. When I come again shall I find Faith upon Earth?* We have been contending about Matters of a remoter nature, but now we are to maintain the great and necessary Truths of Christianity, against Men whose Confidence
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and Crimes vie with each other. We have been disputing about Rites and Ceremonies, Forms of Prayer, Circumstantials of Government, and Modes of Expression; but now we are to defend the Foundation and Being of Religion, against the Assaults and Attacks of Men who are Enemies to all Goodness and Virtue, and therefore to divine Revelation. Nor is Religion in danger only from the Profane and Enthusiast, from the Sinner and Scoffer, but also from the Zealot and Superstitious; for whilst one explodes the Scripture as false, and the other rejects it as a dead Letter; while one sets up Reason, another a private Spirit, Fancy or Tradition in the room of it; while one plainly denies its Authority, and another eludes it; every way the Christian Religion is undermin'd, and our holy Faith, *once deliver'd to the Saints*, shaken and overthrown. And where Faith decays, Iniquity must consequently abound, and Immorality must advance the same Pace with Infidelity; for there is nothing to restrain Mens vicious Inclinations when their Principles are deprav'd; and the Word is preach'd in vain when it is not mix'd with Faith in them that hear it. It is with design to obviate, as much as in me lies, this fatal and spreading

spreading Mischief, and withal to prepare and dispose the Minds of the Hearers for the better Reception of those Discourses which are to follow here this Winter, that I have pitch'd upon this Text; the best way to give a Check to Infidelity and Immorality, being in general to establish by plain and uncontrollable Arguments the divine Authority of holy Writ; and the best way to render Sermons profitable, being to possess the Minds of an Auditory with a firm Persuasion that the Doctrines preach'd to them, if consonant to holy Writ, are the Truths of God.

That by the Word of God in my Text we are to understand, not any unwritten Tradition, but the written Word, is evident from several Arguments which may be deduc'd from the Text itself. The Word which *St. Paul* preach'd every where was *Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*; and therefore this must be the Word which the *Thessalonians* heard of him. This Word is said here to *work effectually in them that believ'd*, i. e. it converted and sanctify'd them; this nothing but the Gospel contain'd in the Scriptures could do; nor can this with any Propriety be attributed to any unwritten Tradition;

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Tradition; nor, in the third place, is there any Doctrine or Practice not contain'd in Scripture of that Moment or Importance, that the Conformity of the *Thessalonians* to it, or its Influence upon them, should be Matter of such mighty Joy to St. Paul: *For this cause thank we God without ceasing.* Lastly, this Phrase, *the Word of God*, in St. Paul, or as it is elsewhere call'd, *the Word of Life* or *Salvation*, signifies nothing less than the Gospel, or the Covenant of Grace; and this we are sure is fully explain'd and set down in holy Scripture.

I need not tell you on what Account the Gospel is call'd *the Word of God*, since you cannot be ignorant that it was first preach'd by the Mouth of the Son of God, and afterwards by his Apostles, who were commission'd by him, and empower'd and qualify'd to preach it by the Holy Ghost. *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last Days spoken to us by his Son, Heb. i. 1. All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you, John xv. 15. As my Father sent me, so send I you. And when he had said that, he breathed on them, saying,*
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Receive

the Word of GOD. 5

Receive ye the Holy Ghost, Joh. xx. 21. Ye shall receive Power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be Witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost Parts of the Earth, Acts i. 18.

These things being clear, the Sense of these Words may be resolv'd into these three Doctrines.

1. *That the Scripture, or which is all one, the Doctrine contain'd in it, is the Word of God.*
2. *That it works effectually where it is sincerely believ'd.*
3. *That as it was Matter of great Joy to St. Paul to behold the happy Influence of his Preaching, so it is at this Day a great and just Cause of Rejoycing and Thankfulness towards God, when any Minister of the Gospel beholds the Success of his Labours in the Faith and Obedience of his Hearers.*

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But the first of these is as much as I now propose to speak to. I shall then first prove the divine Authority of Scripture, I mean the New Testament, to which my Text confines me; and then make some plain Inferences from it.

1. If Scripture be not the Word of God, then Christianity is a mere Cheat and Imposture; and if Christianity be an Imposture, there never was, nor yet is, such a thing as true Religion in the World, which is the highest Absurdity imaginable. That Christianity must be an Imposture if the Scriptures be not the Word of God, is evident; for Christianity can stand upon no Foundation but divine Revelation; nor does it pretend to any other Revelation besides that contain'd in the Scriptures. As to what I have asserted further, that if Christianity be false, there neither ever was, nor yet is, such a thing as a *true Religion*; and that this is the greatest Absurdity that can be, is no less plain. That there should be a God, the Creator
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tor and Governor of the World, and no true and known Way of worshipping him; that Man should be made capable of Religion, and inclin'd to it, and yet that there should be no such thing as true Religion; every one must see upon the first Reflection he makes, that this is repugnant to common Sense; and yet thus it must be if Christianity be an Imposture. For as to the Patriarchal Religion, the Institution of the Sabbath and Sacrifice, together with this Promise of the Messias, prove that to have been nothing else but Christianity in embryo, the Dawning of that Day we now enjoy. As to *Judaism*, it was in Type, Figure, and Prediction, what Christianity is in Substance and Accomplishment. When I say this of *Judaism*, I take it in its true spiritual Sense and most comprehensive Notion, as including the *Abrahamick* and *Mosaick* Covenant. As to other Religions, *Paganism* and *Mahometanism*, we are so far from being in any doubt whether they be true, that on the other hand we account them so far from being an Honour to God, that we look upon them as a Shame and Reproach to human Nature; and we are amaz'd to think how the Reason of
Mankind

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Mankind should degenerate so far as to worship Stocks and Stones with the *Pagan*; or with the *Mahometan*, to embrace the Fables and expect the Rewards of the *Alcoran*.

If any one shall here object, 'That tho' these Religions should all have been false and fabulous, yet still there was and is such a thing as true Religion; namely, that which we call *natural*. To this it is easy for me to answer: That there never was yet any Nation or Community of Men that embrac'd or profess'd meer natural Religion, *i. e.* a Religion consisting in such a Worship of God as the meer Light of Reason dictated. And whoever shall seriously reflect on the Frame and Make of Man, the State of the present World, the universal Degeneracy of Mankind, not only when destitute of Revelation, but even in Defiance of it, will easily conclude, that Reason by its own Light and Force neither ever did nor could advance Man to true Virtue and true Happiness: And whoever shall reflect on the several Dispensations of divine

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Providence from the Creation to this Day, will as easily conclude God never design'd it should. If it be reply'd, that natural Religion, tho' it never subsisted pure and sincere of it self, was yet ever mixt with all Kinds of Religion: I answer; the Truth is, all other Religions did but maim, defile, deform and deface natural Religion; Christianity only has improv'd and establish'd it.

My Argument then for the divine Authority of Scripture stands firm: The Scriptures must be the Word of God, or else Christianity must be false; and if this be false, there neither is, nor was, any such Thing as true Religion; which I have shew'd is the highest Absurdity. This Argument I took from the Words of *St. Peter* to our Saviour, *John vi. 68. Lord! to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life:* Which, without any Force, I comment thus; If the Spirit of Christ in his Word do not lead us, we must wander for ever; if we cannot find Life and Salvation in the Gospel, we must be miserable for ever: for 'tis in vain to seek it amongst *Pagans* or *Jews*, *Mahometans* or *Philosophers*; there is nothing pure, nothing sincere, nothing solid, nothing clear amongst these. I would

not here be misunderstood ; I do not pass Sentence on *Pagan* and *Mahometan*, but Paganism and Mahometanism ; I do not condemn the Man, but his Religion ; 'tis not my Business now to enquire, whether all are actually lost who are of these Religions, 'tis enough to my Purpose that these Religions are false.

2. The great End and Design of the Gospel, is such as evidently proves that there can be no Cheat in it ; that the Wonders by which it is attested, must be from the Holy Ghost, not the Devil ; that the Prophets and Apostles must be commission'd and inspired by God, and not Impostors. The great Business of the Gospel, is to make Men wise and good, holy, and consequently happy, both here and hereafter ; 'tis to open Men's Eyes, and *to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the service of the living God, that they may obtain remission of sins, and an inheritance of glory.* 'Tis, in a word, to advance universal Righteousness in the World, to fill Men's Minds with Joy and Peace, and make them abound in Hope. Now, is it to be imagin'd, that wicked Spirits should make this their great Design, to make Men wise and good ? Is it possible that they who

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are fill'd with Rage and Envy, should contrive, and plot, and travel to fill us with Joy, and Peace, and Hope? Can it be conceiv'd, that Devils, profest and inveterate Enemies of God and Man, should propose to themselves no other End of their Artifices and lying Wonders, of their Frauds and Impostures, but the promoting and establishing the Glory of the one, and the temporal and eternal Happiness of the other? These Things are too gross to be swallowed by any one, who thinks seriously and impartially of this Matter.

Will any Man say, tho' this Imposture could not proceed from the Devil, yet from ill Men peradventure it might? This cannot be; ill Men are incapable of forming such perfect Ideas of an exalted Virtue, as we meet with in the Gospel; they can never express themselves in that clear and feeling manner upon spiritual and divine Subjects; they can never exhort to Holiness, and reprove and rebuke Sin, with that Life and Power, with that Zeal and Authority which the Prophets do in the Old Testament, and Christ and his Apostles do in the New. Impostors could not lay a Design of converting the World; they could never have set on Foot a Project, which is so far from

serving a Turn, or gratifying a Lust, that it declares open War against both. In a word, wicked Men would never have set on Foot a Project, which they could never hope to see executed, unless they could work Miracles, and fulfil Predictions, and unless they themselves would first become eminent Examples of that Purity and Self-denial to which they exhorted others; and afterwards sealed their Doctrine with their Blood.

But tho' ill Men could have no Reason for advancing such an Imposture upon the World, good Men you may think might. We have heard often of pious Frauds, and lying Wonders, and Law-givers have often pretended to divine Authority, for the better establishing and enforcing their Laws.

But this is as unaccountable a Supposition as the former; that made ill Men do the best Things, and this makes good Men do the worst. Good Men cannot, be Cheats and Impostors; they cannot affront God, nor deceive and abuse Man; they cannot lie nor perjure; they cannot, as *St. Paul* words it, *Be false witnesses of God*; nor can they solemnly invoke God as Witness to a Falsity. In a word, they cannot speak in
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the Name of God, when God has not sent them ; they cannot devise Predictions, nor counterfeit Miracles ; nor can they lay down their Lives in Testimony, that that Gospel is of divine Revelation, which was meerly their own Invention. These Things, I say, good Men cannot do ; and yet these Things they must have done, if the Gospel were only a Fable cunningly devised, as the Objection supposes.

As for pious Frauds, and lying Wonders, it imports that Church who justifies such Practices, to defend the Virtue and Reputation of the Authors of them ; and when this is done, the Practices of mistaken, if well meaning Men, to support a Party, and maintain a particular Opinion, will no way affect the Cause I am now pleading for ; there is no more Resemblance between this Case, and that of the Gospel, than between solid Virtue and blind Zeal, real and false Miracles, the true Good of Mankind, and the Interest and Design of a Party.

As for the Instances of *Numa Pompilius*, *Minos*, and such like, they are nothing to the purpose ; they were themselves ignorant Idolaters ; their Laws had nothing in them of the Spirit and Design of the Gospel

their Aim was only the secular Grandeur of a particular People, the establishing sovereign Dominion in themselves and their Children, and the perpetuating their Name and Glory to Posterity. All which is very remote from the Case of the Apostles and Prophets.

3. Besides the two former Proofs of the divine Authority of Scripture, there are several others which I must crowd together, that I may keep within the common Bounds of a Sermon; such are the Profoundness of the Doctrine, the Connection and Correspondency of its Parts, its Power and Efficacy, the Majesty and Significancy of its Style, the Accomplishment of Predictions, the Sanctity and Simplicity of its Authors, the Miracles they wrought, and the Deaths they underwent, for Confirmation of it; and lastly, the Testimony of the Church of Christ, that these Writings are the Works of the Prophets, Evangelists and Apostles. I will not pretend to insist fully and distinctly on each of these Heads, but only to set them in a clear Light before you, in as few Words as possibly I can.

1. Then, that the Writings, whose Authority I maintain, were the Writings of the Apostles and Prophets, we are assured by
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by constant and catholick Tradition of the Church of Christ. And no sensible Man can question the Credit of this Testimony, if we consider with what Veneration the first Christians must have receiv'd the Writings of the Apostles; how carefully the Originals were preserv'd; how diligently the Copies of them were dispers'd through all Nations, People and Languages; and how constantly the Churches of Christ did appeal to these, as the Rule of Faith and Manners, and the Pastors did ever exhort and press their People to the Study of them, as being the Power of God unto Salvation, the Fountains of Life and Truth. This being clear, what remains to be prov'd is, the Apostles and Evangelists were commission'd, empower'd, and qualified by God to publish this Gospel; and this is very evident from the Arguments I have mention'd. Let us consider the Character of the Doctrine, and the Men who taught it. How could ignorant and unletter'd Men devise such Mysteries as should be worthy of the Majesty of God, and suitable to the great Ends and Interest of Mankind, and establish them upon such Grounds, that all sober and impartial Men should see abundant Reason to embrace them, and none of the Learned of

the World should yet be able to baffle or confute them? How should these be able to contrive a Scheme of Religion so exactly consonant in Reality, both to the Old Testament and the Reason of Mankind; tho' so opposite in Appearance to both, as Judaism and Philosophy then stood, that the Gospel was *a stumbling-block to the Jew,* and *folly to the gentiles*? How should they cloathe the Mysteries they taught in such intelligible and proper Language, and this even at first Thought, that neither Time nor Learning has ever been able to improve it, or discover any Thing in it that needs to be reformed or corrected? Nay, when Men of Parts and Learning have, in the Explanation of these Mysteries, deviated from the Phrase of Scripture, they have rather embroiled and perplext themselves and others, than added either Strength or Light to the Truths of the Gospel. In a word, How should a handful of poor ignorant People start up on a sudden, in a World full of Darknes and Wickedness, and carry human Reason to such a Height, that all the Measures of Right or Wrong, of Good and Evil, should for ever after be decided by their Writings, and Wisdom and Folly, Truth and Falshood estimated

estimated by a Conformity to them, or Deviation from them? Never was any Writing so apt to enlighten, move and affect the Mind of Man; and Man, when he is thoroughly influenced by it, becomes as like God as he is capable of being, while he is in the Body.

From the Consideration of the *Doctrine* itself, let us pass on to *Predictions* and *Miracles*, by which it was confirm'd: It would be a great Work to run through the Correspondency of the *New Testament* with the *Old*, in this one Particular of Prophecies; I will only tell you, that the Incarnation and Birth, the Preaching and Works, the Sufferings and Resurrection, together with the Ascension and Glory of our Lord, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, and the Success of all together, were foretold in the *Old Testament*, and accomplished in the *New*. And these were Things of that Nature, that none but God could foretel, none but God could accomplish.

As to *Miracles*, they are Works which infinitely transcend the Wit or Force of Man; 'tis very plain that he could not; and without debasing the Power of Hell, I have before prov'd, that the Devil would not work any such Thing for the Confirmation of the Gospel. Now that Miracles were frequently

ly and openly wrought for this Purpose by Christ and his Apostles, is a Fact that has in it all the Notoriety imaginable: The Enemies of the Cross, the *Jew* and *Gentile*, never denied it; the *Devil* himself confess'd it, by confronting true Miracles with false ones, and hereby labouring to defeat and elude the Force of them. Nay, the very Success of the Gospel abundantly proves this: When did ever the Discourse of any Philosopher, like St. *Peter's*, convert Three Thousand at a Time? No Strength of Reason, no Force of Eloquence, could have so triumph'd over the Reason of Mankind, and so easily dispossest them by whole Shoals at a Time, of their Prejudices and Errors, of their Lusts and Passions, as the Gospel did; unless it had been back'd and inforc'd, as that was, by the Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power.

To conclude this Argument, If that one single Miracle, the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead, on which the whole Gospel turns, be plain and indisputable, we can doubt of nothing else. And what can be better attested than this? *And we*, says St. *Peter*, Acts v. 32. *are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost whom God hath given them that obey him.* Is not the Testimony of
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the Spirit sufficient? Or can any honest or impartial Man doubt, whether the Spirit did thus bear Witness to the Resurrection of Christ? Was the Effusion of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, a Thing done in a Corner? Does not *St. Paul*, in all his Epistles sent to be publish'd and read in all the Churches, treat frequently of the Use and End of miraculous Gifts, and prescribe Rules for the Exercise of them in their Assemblies? Does he not appeal to the miraculous Power of the Spirit in himself, as to the Seal of his Commission, and in them all, as the Proof of the Divinity of the Gospel Dispensation? With what Sense, with what Front could any Man have done this, had there been then in the Churches no such Thing as miraculous Gifts?

Having said thus much of the Testimony of the Holy Spirit, I need say the less of the Testimony of Man; I will only put you in mind, that when the Apostles bore Witness to the Resurrection, they attested nothing but what they had seen with their Eyes, and handled with their Hands: They were Men who were bright Examples of the Doctrine they taught, living Proofs of its Divine Power and Energy: Their Lives shew'd plainly, that they neither had, nor could

could have any Design but to advance the Glory of God, and the Salvation of the World. They liv'd Confessors, and died Martyrs. Nor did this happen to them contrary to their Projects, or because they had taken wrong Measures; no, it was what Christ foretold them, and they expected. Thus they liv'd, and thus they died; because they heartily embrac'd that Faith which they endeavour'd to propagate amongst others, and did unfeignedly rely upon those great and precious Promises of the Gospel which they publish'd; and 'twas their Business to convince the World they did so.

To all these Arguments I will add one more, and then I shall have done with the Proposition.

4. If these which I have produc'd, be not sufficient Proofs of the Divinity of a Revelation, I must confess I cannot see how God can so reveal himself to any Man, as that the World may be on good Grounds convinc'd he has done so. I see not by what Characters we shall ever be able to distinguish real from pretended Revelation. I see not what Rules can ever be establish'd, by which we may try the Spirits, and discern a true Prophet from a false one. How shall

shall we know that any one is sent to us from God? Are not Wisdom, Power and Goodness, the great Attributes of God? If the Effects of these be conspicuous in the Doctrine, Life and Works of any one, must we not from thence infer, that he is sent of God? If he foretel Things to come, which is an Act of Divine Wisdom; if he works Miracles, which is an Act of Divine Power; if his Life and Doctrine conspire to advance the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, what further Proof can we demand, that such a one is sent of God, and is under the immediate Conduct and Influence of his Holy Spirit.

Let none here object, That there is no need of any new Revelation, since God has plac'd in every Man the Light of Reason, which is sufficient to guide him: For though Reason were sufficient to guide us, 'tis notorious we often refuse to follow it, we often wilfully pervert and abuse it; and is it not highly necessary in such Cases, that God should be able to instruct and reprove the World by his Prophets and Messengers? But alas! 'tis easy for us to see what Perfection and Power we are to attribute to Reason, when abandoned by God, from the miserable

ferable Deportment of Man under the Light and Grace of the Gospel.

If it be said, That God may, if he thinks fit, reveal himself to every particular Man in every Age : I must say, That if we will not admit such Proofs of Divine Revelation as are offer'd in Confirmation of the Gospel, 'twould be impossible, for any Thing I can see, to distinguish the Heats of our Fancy, or a devilish Illusion and Enthufiasm, from a Divine Revelation. Shall God reveal himself in a sensible Manner, by an Angel from Heaven? We know that the Devil can transform *himself into an Angel of Light*. Shall he speak to us in the Dreams and Visions of the Night? Or shall he communicate his Will by any inward Suggestion or Impression? How shall we rationally assure our selves that it is God that speaks to us, if we can neither infer it from the Nature of the Thing revealed, nor from any Sign, or Miracle, or Prediction, that God should vouchsafe us? I know very well, that God may, by an immediate Act of irresistible Power, produce in us what Opinions, Persuasions or Inclinations he thinks fit; but then, if he should perpetually act thus with all the Sons of Men, 'tis plain he would no longer treat us as
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Reasonable Creatures; nor would our Faith and Virtue be a reasonable and voluntary Service; nor should we be any longer in a State of Probation.

From all these Things now put together, 'tis evident, that there is no Proof wanting of the Inspiration of those who penn'd the Scriptures, which we our selves can desire: That Infidelity is inexcusable, because we cannot be guilty of it, without resisting the Holy Ghost: That if we *hear not Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, neither should we be persuaded, though one was sent to us from the dead*, Luke xvi. 31.

Having thus dispatch'd the first Thing proposed; namely, the asserting the Doctrine contain'd in my Text, *That the Scripture of the New Testament, and consequently of the Old, is the Word of God*; I will now proceed to the Second; namely, To make some Practical Inferences from it.

I. If *Scripture be the Word of God*, then whatever is consonant to it, must be true; and whatever is repugnant to it, must be false and impious. This is the Foundation on which we must stand fast, unless we will be carried about by every Wind of Doctrine. *To the Law, and to the Testimony:*
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If they speak not according to this, 'tis because there is no light in them, Isaiah viii. 20. This is the Great Rule by which all Spirits and Doctrines must be try'd, all Controversies decided, all Doubts and Scruples resolved, which concern our eternal Interest. And whilst both *Romanists* and *Quakers* must grant these Scriptures a true Rule, as they must, if they grant them the Word of God, I will not trouble my self to contend with them, whether they be a compleat one; for if the private Spirit of the one, or the Tradition of the other, advance any Doctrine or Practice conformable to Scripture, I embrace it; if contrary to Scripture, I reject it. And I do not remember that we charge, either the one or the other, with any Error which we do not undertake to prove from such Scripture. And as I inferr'd from the Scriptures being the Word of God, that what is consonant to it is true, and what is repugnant to it is false; so I think I might infer further, That what can neither be prov'd nor disprov'd by it, is neither necessary nor damnable in it self, whatever it be accidentally to particular Persons. This must be true, unless there be another Word of God, another Divine Revelation: Such indeed, if any one can produce

duce and prove it to be such, by such Marks and Characters of Divine Authority, as I have before laid down, I shall be ready to submit to it: In the mean Time Men may, for me, think and talk as they please about such Matters as the Scripture neither commands nor forbids, neither asserts nor denies.

The same thing that is said of the *Quakers* Private Spirit, and the *Romanists* Tradition, must be also said of the Reason and Philosophy of *Deists* and *Socinians*; that Reason is false and impious that contradicts God; it may be Pride and Error, but can never be Reason; for God is Truth, and can neither deceive, nor be deceived. And it is meer Nonsense to imagine, that there can be any higher Proof of, or Reason for, any Doctrine, than *Thus saith the Lord*. Nay, there can be no other, much less higher, if it either relate to a Matter of Fact, which he only can attest, because he only can know; or depend on the Free-will of God, and therefore can have no other Certainty than what is founded in the Declaration of his Purpose; or contains Matters which are rais'd so far above us, that we can neither discover them of our selves, nor penetrate further into them, or comprehend more

of them than God does vouchsafe to reveal.

2. If the *Scripture be the Word of God*, 'tis a daring and impious Thing to attempt the eluding the Authority, or depraving the Sense of it by bold Criticisms, forc'd Interpretations, extravagant Pretensions to a private Spirit, or any other Way. What can be more sacrilegious? What can be more dishonourable to God, or injurious to Man? Do we think that God did not know his own Mind; or that he knew not how to express himself? Or do we think, that when he revealed himself to the World, he resolved not to be understood? No, no; this consists not with the Wisdom or the Goodness of God. Let us then ever approach the Scriptures with an awful Reverence, and a devout Sincerity: Let us stick to the Language, the obvious and natural Sense of them, and the Analogy of Faith in all our Interpretations. 'Tis a dangerous Thing to pervert or mislead a single Person; how much more to pervert the Rule by which we are all to square our Faith and Manners; to infect the Fountain where all come to seek the Waters of Life?

3. If we believe the *Scripture to be the Word of God*, we cannot but from hence

conclude, that it is of the last Importance to us to read and study them with the utmost Diligence ; for if the Scripture be the Word of God, the Matter, Method, and Style of it, must be worthy of God ; it must most powerfully conduce to those Ends for which God designed it. Besides, every upright and sincere Man must be desirous to know his Duty ; which if he be, he cannot but carefully search the Scriptures ; for the Measure of Man's Duty is the Divine Will, and the Measure of this Will is the Scripture. I have often said, that Sincerity is as good as Infallibility ; but how difficult is it to find Men sincere ? To constitute Men sincere, 'tis not enough for them to act consonant to their Principles, though it be hard to find this ; but they must take Care that their Principles be consonant to Truth ; that is, to Scripture. On this Account it is that we have just Reason to complain of the Church of *Rome*, because they discourage and prohibit the Reading of the Bible. What is this, but by Implication to grant, that the natural and obvious Sense of the Scripture is against them ; that though Christian Faith and Obedience be built upon Illumination and Knowledge, *Romish* Faith and Obedience can be no otherwise supported

than by Darkneſs and Ignorance. How can we expect any End of Controverſies and Contentions, while they will not ſuffer their People to examine their Opinions and Practices by the Word of God, the only infallible Rule of Faith and Manners?

4. *Laſtly*, If *Scripture be the Word of God*, how falſe and fooliſh are the Politicks and Maxims of the World; how fatal and deſtructive thoſe Opinions which encourage us to admire and dote on Power and Greatneſs, Shew and Honour, Wealth and Pleaſure, and ſuch like tranſitory, empty and uncertain Trifles of this corruptible World? How neceſſary muſt it appear to us to reform theſe Notions, if *Scripture be the Word of God*? For on this Suppoſal, they only are wiſe, who think and act conformable to Scripture; they only are rich, who are *rich in good works*; they only beautiful, who are adorn'd with the Graces of this Spirit; ſtrong and valiant, who are ſtrengthen'd by the Might of the Spirit *in the inward Man*. If *Scripture be the Word of God*, they only are great and honourable, who are eſteemed by, and dear to God; they only happy, who are fill'd with Joy and Peace, and abound with Hope.

To Conclude; If *Scripture be the Word of God*, they only are in the right, who despise this present Life, in Comparison with the future; who propose to themselves nothing here but Self-denial, Vigilance and Caution, Hardships and Temptations, Labour and Travel, and are content to expect the Crown and Reward hereafter.





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SERMON II.

The Sufferings of Christ, their End
and Influence.

2 COR. V. 14, 15.

For the Love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Nothing is more common in our Mouths, than the Warmth of the Primitive Times, and the Coldness of our own; their Charity and Purity, our Sensuality and Selfishness: But I wish we did not content our selves with only magnifying those happy Times, and complaining of our own, but did heartily apply our selves to restore decay'd Charity to its Primitive Power and Lustre. And nothing, I think, will so effectually contribute to this, as the fre-

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quent and devout Contemplation of the Sufferings of Jesus. This was the Subject that employ'd the Thoughts of those Times we so much admire. Jesus Christ, and him crucified, was the only Thing St. *Paul* determined to know; and this, 'tis plain, was enough: For great is the Confidence of Hope; strong and vehement the Longings and Desires after Christ; great is the Transport and Exaltation of Spirit; and finally, great is the Zeal for God's Glory, and for the Service of his Church, which the Apostle expresses throughout this Chapter. And if we enquire whence all these excellent Affections spring, what is the Source and Origin of them, we shall find it to be that which is assigned in my Text; namely, *The love of Christ in dying for us*. And may God so assist us at this Time by his Holy Spirit, that the Consideration of Christ's Sufferings may have the same Influence upon us, which it had upon St. *Paul*: and inflame our Breasts with the same Holy Passion 't did his: That it may prevail with us to dedicate our Lives to the Honour of God, and the Interest of Virtue, that we may come experimentally to say with him, *The love of Christ constraineth us, &c.*

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There is nothing obscure in the Words, and I shall not spend Time in an unnecessary Explication of them; but shall from them discourse of these three Things:

I. The deplorable State of Mankind before they were redeemed by Christ, *Then were all dead.*

II. The Passion of Christ, *He died*, and the great End of it, *For all.*

III. The Influence his Suffering for us ought to have upon us. And that is twofold:

1. It should beget in us a fervent Love of him. We should be possessed, animated, and inflamed by Love: For this is implied in the Word *συνεχῆς*, *The love of Christ constraineth us.*

2. It should prevail with us to devote our selves to his Honour and Service, *to live* not to our selves, but to him *who died* for us, *and rose again.*

I. Of the State of Mankind without Christ, *Then were all dead*, &c. This imports, that the whole World lay under the Dominion, and the Guilt of Sin. The Effect of the former was, that the Light
and

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and Power, both of Reason and Grace, was oppress'd and extinguish'd in them, and the Life they led, instead of being Rational, Spiritual, and Heavenly, was wholly Sensual, Earthly and Devilish. The Consequence of the latter was, that they were subject to God's Wrath, and eternal Punishment; *For the wages of sin is death.* And though no Dispensation did ever so clearly and so fully reveal the eternal Misery that attends the Impenitent, as that of the Gospel; yet both the Law of God and *Moses* did sufficiently assure both the *Jew* and *Gentile*, as *St. Paul* proves, *Rom. i. ii, iii.* Chapt. that he who lived wickedly was worthy of Death; and that *Tribulation* and *Anguish*, *Indignation* and *Wrath*, should one Day certainly overwhelm every soul of man that did evil, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*. On these Accounts it is that Sin, in the Language of the Scripture, is so frequently call'd *Death*. But Death, though it be the greatest Terror of human Nature, can never give us a just and full Representation of the fatal Effects and Consequences of Sin: For Death attacks the Body, but Sin the Soul. The one destroys the Mortal, the other the Immortal Part of us. Death extinguishes the sensitive and animal; Sin the

the rational and spiritual Powers and Faculties of Man. Death defaces the Beauty of the Body; Sin the Image of God in the Soul. Death renders us loathsome to our dearest Friends, so that we must be buried out of their Sight; Sin hateful to God, to our good God and gracious Father, so that we must be for ever banished his Presence. Death puts an end to the Pleasures and Satisfaction of Earth; Sin excludes us from the Joys and Glories of Heaven. The Pangs of Death are short, but those of Sin will be for ever: For the Worm that gnaws the Sinner's Heart must never die; and the Fire that Sin kindles must never be quench'd.

This View of Sin, as it gives us a plain Account of the Nature and dismal Consequences of it; so does it tend to form in our Minds a true Notion of the Reason and Design of Christ's Sufferings: For since the World lay in Wickedness; since we are still so subject to it; and since the Wrath of God is so justly inflam'd against it, we may readily infer, that without shedding of Blood, there could be no Remission; that the redeeming a lost World, was a Design worthy of the Goodness of the Father, and fit to be accomplisht, even by the Death
of

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of his dearly beloved Son. And so I pass on to my Second General.

II. The Passion of Christ, and the great End of it.

I. His Passion, *He died.*

I will not pretend to give you the History of our Lord's Sufferings; the bare Recital of some few general Heads of his Affliction and Calamity, will be enough to conduct our Meditations, and to let our Thoughts into those Scenes of Sorrow, which will fill us with the tenderest and liveliest Sense of his Humiliation and Love, and justify the Description of him in the Prophet, *Isa. liii. 3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief.* Many were the Troubles of his *Life*. The Meanness and Narrowness of his Fortune; the Labours and Travels of his prophetick Office; the Scorn and Insults of the Herodians and Sadducees; the Calumnies, Snares, and Persecutions of the Scribes and Pharisees; the Obduracy of the *Jewish* Nation; and the Stupidity and Incredulity of his own Disciples, were Things could not but affect him. But I must confine my self to his last Sufferings and Death. He was betray'd and forsaken by his Disciples;

Disciples ; maliciously and impudently charg'd with the worst of Crimes by the *Jews* ; mock'd and insulted, spit upon and buffeted by the Gentiles. Nor were these any other than Preludes to his Tragedy. The Spittle and the Palm of the Hand carried much Indignity in it, but little of Pain. The Reed, Scourge, and the Crown of Thorns, were as cruel and painful, as the other were contumelious and insolent. But these were nothing to the *Spear that pierced his Side and Heart* ; much less to the Nails of the Cross which wounded and tore his Hands and Feet ; and the Weight of the Body hanging upon them, exasperated and enraged the Wounds. These were the Sufferings of his *Body*, to which those of his *Soul* were nothing inferior : We find him, as he went up to *Jerusalem*, extremely afflicted and cast down. We hear him complaining, that *his Soul was sorrowful within him, even unto death* : His Agony in the Garden, wherein *his sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground* : His breaking out into strong Cries and Groans upon the Cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me* ; are all manifest Expressions of the unspeakable Anguish of his Soul.

Nor

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Nor are we to wonder, that the Tide of his Sorrow should swell so high; many are the Reasons that may be assigned of it. I cannot, I confess, conceive how the Despair and Horrors of the Damned should seize upon the Soul of the dearly beloved Son of God. His Father was ever well pleased with him, and surely never more than when he *humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross*; and our Lord well knew that he was so: Whence it was that he assur'd the Thief that confess'd him, *To day shalt thou be with me in paradise*. Nor can I think, that the Anguish of his Soul sprung meerly from its Sympathy and Communion with the Body, how great soever the Sufferings of this were: For then the Patience and Courage of many Martyrs would seem not only to have equal'd, but exceeded Christ's. I deny not but it must be an Aggravation of his Sufferings, to see himself made an infamous Spectacle, expos'd to Mockery and Derision; but I believe his Soul was too holy, too pure, too heavenly, too elevated, to be extremely mov'd by the Reproach and Scorn of a foolish and vicious World. And that Expression of St. Paul, Heb. xii. *He despised the shame*, does evidently

dently countenance my Opinion. I do not, lastly, doubt but the Grief of his Mother, the Confusion of his Relations and Friends, the Weakness and Cowardice, the faithless Fears and Distresses of his Disciples, were an Addition to the Pain and Trouble of his Soul: For he who wept over *Jerusalem*, who was tenderly affected, even by a distant Prospect of the Calamities of his Enemies, could not surely be insensible of the Sorrows and Afflictions of his Friends, at the very Time when they were overwhelmed by them. But all these Things do not yet sufficiently account for the unparallel'd Agony of our Saviour's Soul. What then shall we assign further for the Reasons of it?

1. The Scripture seems to assert, and all I think grant, that God retir'd from him for a while, and as it were, hid his Face from him; that he was left to bear the Cross by the Strength of Faith, and ordinary Grace, and to tread the Wine-press of God's Wrath alone; the Wrath I mean of God, not against his Son, but against the Sins of the whole World, which Christ now sustain'd like a Victim, and bore in his Body upon the Cross. Otherwise I cannot see, why he, who could have commanded Legions of Angels to rescue his Body, might

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not have commanded more than a common Strength and Assistance to rescue his Soul too. But the blessed Jesus was willing to drink off the very Dregs of the bitter Cup, to bear all our Fears and Sorrows, and suffer all the Frailties and Weaknesses of human Nature, that he might be a more familiar and imitable Example of Obedience, and a more *merciful and compassionate High-Priest*.

2. To this we must add, that his Charity, which always reigned and ruled in his Soul, could not but render the Prospect he then had of Things, extreamly afflicting to him: He was sensible, how great a Sin his Crucifixion involv'd the Nation of the *Jews* in, and he easily foresaw what dreadful Vengeance God would take of them. All those frightful Stories, that were after acted, either by themselves or their Enemies; all the Miseries that the *Roman* Sieges or Slaughters, or their own Divisions and Inhumanity brought upon them, did now present themselves to his Thoughts; as is plain from *Luke xxiii. 28, 29, 30. Ye Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for your selves and children: For behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, blessed are the barren, and the womb that never bare, and the*

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their End and Influence. 41

paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains fall on us, and to the hills cover us.

3. There is an Argument for his Sorrow and Melancholy behind still, of that Weight and Pressure, that I wonder not, if the Soul of the holy and gracious Jesus did in a manner sink under it: As he saw well enough what he was to suffer, and knew well enough for what End, so he could not be ignorant what would be the Success and Issue of all at last. He foresaw, how great a Part of the World would reject the Gospel; how great a Part would apostatize and degenerate from it; and of those that would receive it, how many there were that would receive it to their greater Condemnation. He, in a word, could not but foresee how short he should fall of the Success which his Soul thirsted after, and how little comparatively, would be the Fruit of his Travels and Condescensions, of his Sufferings and Blood. Ah then! how deeply must the Infidelity and Ingratitude, the Madness and the Misery, not of the *Jewish* only, but of the Gentile and Christian World, pierce that Soul which was so passionately concern'd for the Glory of his Father, and the Salvation of Man; and that too at an Hour,

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when

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when the Love of Christ, if it were capable of increasing, was now at the Height!

Thus have I taken a very short and imperfect Survey of the Sufferings of Jesus; however, as imperfect as it is, it is enough to convince us of the Greatness of his Love, and to make us see how much it cost him to redeem the World: Let us now in the next Place consider the great End of his Passion.

2. That the End of all that Christ did and suffer'd, was to *save his People from their Sins*, is very plain, *Mat. i. 25*. Now in Sin, as I have said before, there are two Things:

The Guilt, and Dominion of it.

From these two, therefore, Christ by his Death delivers us.

1. *From the Guilt*. This he did by offering up himself once upon the Cross, a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World. This Notion of the Death of Christ, is a very easy and intelligible, a very comfortable and delightful one; at

once exalting the Glory of God, and the Love of Jesus, and establishing the Hopes of poor Sinners, upon a firm and unshaken Foundation. And as this Notion is intelligible, comfortable, and pious; so is it highly consonant to Reason and Scripture. No Man considers the Purity and Holiness of God; the Corruption, Pride, and Confidence of Man; but he will easily be able to resolve, why God should not think fit to grant Remission of Sin without shedding of Blood; to pardon Mankind, without a propitiatory Sacrifice, first offered up by the Hands of a Mediator. It became God to assert the Authority of his Laws, the Majesty of his Government, the Justice and Sanctity of his Nature; to cure and restrain the vicious Propensions of Man, and repress his Insolence, and Presumption, by some illustrious Instance of his Indignation against Sin; and his infinite Goodness and Wisdom to pitch upon such a way of our Redemption, wherein his Love of Holiness and Mankind, his Mercy and his Justice, might be equally conspicuous, as they were in the Death of Jesus. Lastly, The Doctrine of Satisfaction is so expressly, frequently, and clearly taught in the Scriptures, that no Subtilty, no Sophistry, can elude

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the Force of such Texts; but it must at the same Time overthrow the Authority of Scripture, and leave us no Rule, either of Faith or Manners: For if the Scripture be not plain in this Point, it will be difficult to prove it plain in any. Christ himself was holy and innocent, he had not incurr'd the displeasure of his Father by the least Deviation from his Will. No Guilt was ever found in his Mouth; no Violence in his Hands; no Falshood, Impurity, or Hypocrisy ever stain'd his holy Soul: *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* He suffer'd not then for himself, neither bore he the Chastisements of his own Sins. Therefore 'tis, when the Prophet *Daniel* foretells that the Messias should be *cut off*, he foretells too, that it should not be for himself, *Dan. ix.* and the Prophet *Isaiah* ch. liii. describes his Sufferings; he lets us know that they were for the sake of Man: *He bore our Infirmities: He was wounded for our transgressions, and the chastisements of our peace were laid upon him.* The plain Sense of which Words, according to the Language of the *Old Testament*, is this, that he suffered to deliver us from the Punishment due to our Sins: And this is the constant Doctrine of the *New Testament*, *Gal. iii. 13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse*

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curse for us ; for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. So a little after my Text, v. 21. God is said to have made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. It were endless to multiply Texts: The holy Spirit throughout the whole *New Testament* does nothing else but overthrow all Pretensions to Justification by the Law of Works, and establish Justification by Faith in the Blood of Jesus: And as it every where asserts, that the Wrath of God and eternal Death are due to Sin, so does it every where advance the Merit and Efficacy of the Blood of Christ, as our Ransom and Propitiation, and the sole Foundation of our Peace and Reconciliation with God.

To all this, if we add this one Observation further, That the Practice of atoning God by Sacrifice prevail'd throughout the whole Gentile World; whether deriv'd at first from divine Institution, or from the common Sense of Mankind, matters little. That the *Mosaic* Institution consisted in the first Place in propitiatory Sacrifices; by which as the Author to the *Hebrews* has shew'd us, the Sacrifice of Christ was typified and adumbrated; and that it was the constant Sense which both Jew and

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Gentile entertain'd of Sacrifice, that it was offer'd up to appease the Wrath of God: This, I say, being added to what went before, renders the great Article of Satisfaction as clear as any other in the Gospel.

Well may the Scriptures now invite us *to glory in the Lord; to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; to count all things as dung and dross, in comparison with an interest in Jesus.* 'Tis he, who by his death hath abolish'd death, and brought life and immortality to light. 'Tis he who hath disarm'd the Law of its condemning Force, and Death of its sting. 'Tis he who destroy'd the enmity that was betwixt God and man, and procur'd glory in the highest, and peace on earth. 'Tis he who hath chang'd our fears into hopes, our sorrows into joy, our bondage into liberty, our misery into blessedness. 'Tis through him we have access with boldness into that grace wherein we stand. Blessed be God who hath so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. Blessed be Jesus, who hath loved us, and laid down his life for us, and washed us from our sins by his own blood; and blessed are we, if we neglect not this great salvation. Blessed are we whose sins shall not be imputed to us,
and

and whose sincere Endeavours shall be as *acceptable to God through Christ*, as unfinning Obedience otherwise would have been. Blessed and happy are we, who of *aliens* are become *members of the household of faith*, and of *enemies* are become *children of God*; and if *children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*. But then we must not forget, that there is another End of the Death of Christ; and this is,

2. To deliver us from the *Dominion of Sin*. Whether we consider the Death of Christ separately and alone, or in Conjunction with his Resurrection, for both ways it occurs in my Text; whatsoever Notion we entertain of it; whatever Causes we assign, every way we shall find it directly tend to invite and oblige us to Holiness. Did he aim at the Happiness of Man in it? This consists in being transformed into the divine Image by Righteousness and Holiness; for this is that which gives us Peace and Tranquility here, and fits and qualifies us for Glory hereafter: *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. Did he aim at the Glory of his Father? 'Tis the Holiness of his Worshipers, which asserts and vindicates the Honour of God from

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those,

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those, either mean and dishonourable, or blasphemous Notions of him, which had obtained generally amongst the *Gentiles*, and too far amongst the *Jews*, and represents him great and lovely to the World: *Hereby is the Father glorified, that you bring forth much fruit, John xv. 8. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven, Mat. v. 16.* Did Christ in his Death set his Followers an Example of Obedience; ought every one that says he *abides in him, so to walk even as he walk'd*? What manner of Men then ought we to be, who profess our selves the Disciples of Christ? If we, as he did, are bound to lay down our Lives for the Glory of God; for the Defence and Propagation of Truth and Righteousness; How much more are we bound to Sacrifice our Lusts and Passions, our Humours and Fancies, our Ease and Pleasure, our Wealth, and the Esteem of a vain World, to these glorious Ends? Did Jesus lay down his Life to bear Testimony to his Doctrine? Why do not we believe it? Or if we do, why then are not our Lives consonant to our Faith? Impieties of flat Contradiction to the whole Scheme of the Gospel, to the Doctrines, to the Precepts, to the Promises, to the Threats

Threats of it, and to the Nature of God, who is revealed in it. *For this*, says St. *John*, *is the message that we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Lastly, Did Christ die to procure and ratify a Covenant of Grace? 'Tis plain, that Holiness is the Condition of this Covenant. Great and precious, indeed, are the Promises which God has made in it: But they are limited and restrain'd to such as are qualified for them by *Faith and Repentance.* *There is, indeed, no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus:* But who are those? *Those who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* Those whom the *Law of the Spirit of Life* has set free from the *Law of Sin and Death:* Those, who in the Language of my Text, *live not to themselves; but to him who died for them, and rose again.* Shall I go on,

And examine, Whether the Necessity of Holiness may not be as evidently inferr'd from the Resurrection of Christ, as from his Death? Does not the Scripture everywhere argue thus? Is not dying, or being *crucified with Christ*, in the Language of the Scripture, our *dying to sin*? And what is our *rising with him*, but rising to *newness of life*? If his Resurrection be a Demonstration of a
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Judgment to come, as it is made, *Acts xvii.*
 31. how diligently ought we to prepare
 for his Coming; how circumspectly ought
 we to walk, how ought we to wait and
 watch for his Appearance, and *work out*
our salvation with fear and trembling?
 If his Resurrection be so irrefragable a
 Proof of the Life and Immortality that is
 prepared for his Followers, that we may be
 said to be *rais'd up*, and *set with him already*
in heavenly places, *Ephes. ii.* How then
 ought our *Affections to be set on things above?*
 How ought we to *abound in good works*, that
 we may make a good Provision *for the time*
to come, and *lay hold on eternal life?*

To conclude, Does not the same Scrip-
 ture which tells us, that *God has rais'd up*
Jesus, and made him both *Prince and Savi-*
our, tell us too, in what the Exercise of his
 Dominion and Power does consist? In *bles-*
sing us, and *turning us from our iniquity*, in
 giving us *Repentance*, and then *Remission of*
Sins; in *shedding forth his Spirit upon us*, and
 making us *mete to be partakers of the inbe-*
ritance of Saints in Light. I will argue no
 further; I do not doubt but that we are con-
 vinc'd that the promoting Holiness was one
 great End of the Death and Resurrection of
 Jesus. I do not doubt, but that we are all
 fully

fully persuaded, that none shall ever obtain *Remission of Sins*, and *Inheritance of Glory*, but those who are *sanctified through Faith in Jesus*. We all indeed confess this to be true: But who would guess by our Lives, that we really did believe it? Ah! who that considers the Cares and Fears, the Projects, the Pleasures of Mankind, would imagine that they did believe, that *without holiness no man shall see God*! Who that considers the Business that employs this Man's Mind, and that Man's Body; the Vices to which one sacrifices his Time, and another his Health and Strength, a third his Fortune and Honour, would imagine that such did believe, and were persuaded that none shall ever enter into Heaven, but such as live above the Body, and above the World! Is it possible that so much Coldness and Remissness in Religion, so much Passion and Contention for the World; is it possible that so much Sloth, and so much Pride, so much Sensuality, and so much Hypocrisy as every-where reigns this Day, can consist with a Persuasion, that Christ redeems none from *the Wrath to come*, but those whom he first redeems from a vicious Conversation; that none do truly feel the *Power and Influence*, or shall ever enjoy the Benefit of his *Death*
and

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and Resurrection, but such as are a *peculiar people to him, zealous of good works*; such as *live not to themselves, but to him who dy'd for them, and rose again*? Thus have I consider'd the State of sinful Man, the Death and Sufferings of Jesus, and the great End of it, the delivering us from the *Dominion and Guilt of our Sins*; which will farther appear from the Third Thing.

III. The Influence which the Love of Christ in dying for us, ought to have upon us. And the Text teaches us plainly what it is, it ought to beget Love, and Love beget Obedience.

1. The Love of Christ ought to enflame us with the Love of him. Love is the natural Return of Love; and if so, never could any Love more justly challenge and deserve ours, than the Love of Jesus. If we look upon him himself we meet with all in him that is either Great or Honourable, Sacred or Lovely. If we look upon what he has done and suffered for us, we meet with all that the strongest Passion, the firmest and the vehementest Love could ever atchieve. As to himself, he was *the brightness of his Father's Glory, the express image*
of

of his Person, the Heir of all things. By him God made the worlds, and he upholds all things by the word of his Power. How great then must the Love of Jesus be which mov'd him, being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God; to make himself, for our sakes, of no reputation; to take upon him the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of man; and not so only, but being found in fashion as a man, to humble himself, and become obedient to death, even the death of the Cross?

As to his Sufferings, I will not run over them again; the View I have just now given you of them, will easily enable you to conclude, that as *there was never sorrow like his sorrow, so there was never love like his love.* Yet I will observe two or three Things relating to them, which as they wondrously advance the Value of his Love, so they naturally tend to kindle ours.

I. There was nothing in us to deserve his Love, much to deserve his Aversion and Hatred: We were not only fallen from the Purity and Dignity of our Primitive State, by the Sin of our first Parents; but by voluntary Transgressions had extinguish'd all the Relicks of Light and Strength in us. Wickedness and Idolatry overspread the
World,

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World, and the whole Race of Mankind were become avow'd Enemies to God and Goodness. This was our State, when Jesus took upon him the Work of our Redemption. We may well magnify the Love of Jesus in the same Words St. *John* does that of God, 1 *John* iv. 10. *Herein is love, not that we loved Christ, but that he loved us, and gave himself for us, to be a propitiation for our sins.*

2. Nothing less is the ultimate End and Design of Christ's Love than eternal Glory, a Crown, a Kingdom; sitting down with him on his Throne, and participating his own Divine Joys. Had he only freed us from the Wrath to come, and from the present Misery we lay under: Had he purchas'd for us short and moderate Happiness, such as might have suited with that earthly State, and mortal Nature, we had lain under unspeakable Obligations to him: What do we then owe him now? When he has by his Death abolish'd Death, and open'd to us the way to Life, Immortality and Glory.

3. He effected all this, not only by his stooping to *Incarnation*, by taking upon himself *the Form of a Servant*, by the Labours and Travels of Life; but by the *Cross* and *Shame*, by the *Agonies of his Soul*, by
Wounds

Wounds and Death. This was a great and constant Passion. This was a Love becoming the Excellence and Perfection, the Majesty and the Goodness of the Son of God: *Greater love than this hath no man, than to lay down his life for his friends,* John xv. 13. And yet how far short are these Words of taking the Height of the Love of Jesus? When these Things are consider'd, no Man will be surpriz'd at that Denunciation of St. Paul, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema-Maranatha,* 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Not (to love) the Lord Jesus Christ, but consequently to betray and crucify him afresh, and put him again to an open Shame, after he has suffer'd this for our Salvation! 'Tis an Ingratitude, 'tis a Crime which nothing but Hell, but an eternal Hell can sufficiently punish: 'Tis a Wickedness which *Tyre* and *Sidon* could not be guilty of; nay, which *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* could not; I cannot tell whether Devils themselves could. I am almost apt to think (supposing fallen Angels had been capable of Salvation) that if Christ had taken on him the Nature of Angels, and had done near so much to redeem those miserable Spirits, as he hath done for miserable Man, it would have been likely to have converted
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the Despair, and Rage, and Malice even of Devils themselves into Love. When I reflect on all these Things together, I conclude, that the Return we are to make to the Love of Jesus, must not only be Love, but an ardent and inflamed Love, a Love worthy of his Sufferings, and of his Acceptance. To encourage and promote which in us, I will here make this Remark, That this Love is a pleasant and delightful Passion: It has nothing of the Servitude and Bondage which is in the Love of the World; but 'tis a Freedom, Liberty, and Elevation of the Soul. It has no Fear, no Uneasiness, no Torment in it, no Envy, no Jealousy, no Distraction, no Impurity, no Dishonour, no Shame, no false and flattering Hopes, no Baffles and Disappointments: 'Tis a Love, in one word, which will not mingle with any mean or vexatious Passion. 'Tis all Light, all Joy, all Tranquility, all Glory. O how calm, how heavenly must be the State of that Bosom that is possessed with this Love! *The Love of Christ constraineth us*, says my Text. O happy Constraint; how sweet the Dominion; how delightful the Violence; how charming the Compulsion of Love, when 'tis the pure and holy Love of Jesus! But after all, I must put you

you in Mind, that the present Life is the Life of Labour and Service; the future one the Life of Pleasure and Enjoyment: That we are here rather to spend our Time in the Works, than the Transports and Joys of Love; and that as we are to take Care that the Love of Jesus beget the Love of him in us; so we must take Care,

Secondly, That our Love produce Obedience. I need not tell you that Love is an active and powerful, as well as a delightful Principle. Our Saviour has expressly made our Zeal for his Service the Test of our Love: *If a man love me, he will keep my Commandments*, John xii. 23. And accordingly the Apostles and Followers of our Lord, in whose Bosoms the Love of Christ, like the Fire on the Altar, ever burnt, and ever bright and clear, were the most illustrious Examples of a sincere, vigorous and persevering Obedience: And this seems so naturally the result of Love, that it is impossible to be otherwise: For can we love Christ, and forsake him? Can we love him, and dishonour him? Can we love him, and betray and crucify him? It cannot be. And yet this we do as often as we transgress his Commandments. Can a sincere and fervent Love of Christ, think any Thing too much

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to do or suffer for his Sake, and the everlasting Enjoyment of him? It cannot be. Love will crucify all rebellious Lusts, surmount all Difficulties, despise all Dangers, and undergo all Evils and Hardships, rather than part with Christ and his Kingdom. And what in all this can appear hard and unreasonable, were there no Crown to reward our Service? There is no Instance of Obedience our Lord requires of us, which he cannot lay a just Claim to, on the Account of what he has done and suffered for us. Must we renounce the Honour and Esteem of the World? We cannot stoop so low for Christ, as he did for us. Must we strip our selves of the Wealth and Possessions of Life? *He being rich, became poor for our sakes, 2 Cor. viii. 9. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.*

In a word; Must we lay down Life itself for the Testimony of Jesus? Can we lay it down with so much Shame, and Pain, and Agony, as our blessed Lord laid down his for us? Now if Gratitude obliges us to all this, even without any Prospect of Reward; ah! how deep must be the Stain of their Ingratitude, whom the Love of Jesus, back'd
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and enforc'd by the Hopes of Heaven, cannot prevail with! What to do? Not to part with Honour, Estate, Life; but with Pride and Vanity, Riot and Luxury, Covetousness and Ambition, and other more painful and dishonourable Lusts than these. But I will press this no further: If we be persuaded that Christ died for the World; we cannot but be persuaded, that we ought to love him: And I am confident that you are as fully convinc'd, that Obedience is the natural Effect of Love, as you are that Love is the natural Effect of Christ's Passion. Nay, I can hardly think that there is any here, who do not pretend, at least, both to love and serve him; because, I can hardly think that any one, besides a direct Infidel, can disclaim Christ, and all hopes of Heaven. But, alas, 'tis too apparent that our Pretences have too little of Sincerity in them. We form, I doubt, too loose Notions of Love and Obedience, and build our Hopes on very false Foundations.

I will lay before you an Example of Love; 'tis that of *St. Paul*, to which you may appeal as the Rule and Test of your own; and though you do not equal it, you must at least endeavour to do so. I find him describing his Love to Christ much after

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this manner: Such is the Power and Force of Love, that through it I offer up my self a holy, living and acceptable Sacrifice. My Understanding shall contemplate no other Object. In Jesus is contain'd all the Treasure of Wisdom and Truth, that my Soul thirsts after. *I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* My Will pursues no other Good but Jesus: In him is all that is lovely and desirable. My Perfection and Happiness, all the Joy, and all the Pleasure my Soul is capable of, flow from him. All my Hopes and Desires center and terminate in him; and *I count all things as dung and dross,* that I may gain and enjoy him. My Body itself is purified and govern'd by this Love: 'Tis prepar'd and sanctified to do his Will; and all my Members are but the Instruments of Righteousness: *Whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, I direct all to his glory.* Such is the Power of this Love, that it has transform'd me into his Image, My Life is nothing but an Imitation of Jesus. I am daily copying out his Life, his Death and Resurrection; so *that it is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me.* Such, finally, is the Force of this Love, that it hath not only raised me above the Corruptions that are in the
World

World through Lust ; but also above my natural Affections, when inconsistent with the Glory and Service of my dear Saviour. I have no Value for the Ease, for the Wealth, for the Honour of this World; nor doth the Rage of *Jew* or *Gentile*, who persecuted my Lord, and will shortly persecute me unto the Death, strike me with any Dread or Terror. I fear neither Bonds, nor Imprisonments, nor Death, by which the Honour of my dear Lord may be advanced. *I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.* I am content to follow through all the Paths of Shame, Pain and Blood he trod, that I may at last enjoy him in his Glory. My Heart thirsts after him, and I am ravish'd with his Love. This World, which others admire, is crucified to me. The Body, which others are so fond of, I am weary of, as that which intercepts my Sight, and detains me from the Presence of my Lord. I would fain break through this Cloud, this Prison: I would fain shake off this Weight: *I long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.* This gives us a true Character of the Love of Christ. 'Tis to be transform'd and moulded into his Image. 'Tis to be acted and influenced by his Example,

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by his Word, and by his Spirit. 'Tis, in short, to live to him who dy'd for us. This, I grant, was a noble Height: This, indeed, was a noble Flight of Love. This is that Love, that perfect Love, that casts out Fear; that fills the Mind with the Joy of the Holy Ghost, and renders the Yoke of Christ easy, and his Burden light. O Love, let me be but rais'd on thy Wings, and I shall not fear, though I saw the Face of the whole Earth covered with Storms and Deluges below me! O Love, let me be but inspirited and impregnated by thy Force, and I shall soon vanquish the World and the Body: Let me be but animated by thy Flame, and no Difficulties, no Weight of Flesh and Blood, will be able to stop my Ascent through Virtue into Glory. I shall mount up as easily in thy Fire, as *Elijah* in his flaming Chariot. O that God, who is Love itself, would, by the Spirit of Love, shed abroad this Love of Jesus in our Hearts, and the Hearts of all that call upon his Name; that as Love made the World, and Love redeemed it; so Love may sanctify it, and prepare it for the Region of Love and Joy, I mean the Region of the Blessed. *Amen, Amen.*



SERMON III.

Motives to, and Preparation for the
Lord's-Supper.

PSALM XXVI. 6.

*I will wash my hands in Innocency, so will I
compass thine Altar, O Lord.*

THE Sense of these Words is very easy; the *Jews* were oblig'd to wash before they entred into the Tabernacle to Worship or Sacrifice; and by this Rite was signified that Purity and Innocence which did fit Men to draw nigh to God, and was a necessary Qualification to render their Persons and their Worship acceptable to him. By *compassing the Altar*, is meant the offering up Sacrifice with Praise and Thanksgiving: This is plain from the following Verse; where the Reason assigned for compassing the Altar is, That *I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.* David, therefore, in these

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Words, declares his Resolution to offer up Eucharistical Sacrifices to God in Innocence and Integrity. Nor do I think that this is to be understood of a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving to be offered upon some solemn Occasion, for a particular Deliverance; nor of any peculiar Preparation of himself for such an Act of Worship, but of his constant Practice, and habitual Innocence; as may easily be gather'd from the Context, wherein he expresses a fix'd Love of Goodness, and a Hate of Wickedness, an Aversion, a settled Aversion for the Conversation of Evil-Doers, and a Delight in the House of God: And all this founded on, and springing from daily and incessant Reflections on the Loving-kindness of God.

If from this Example of *David*, I take occasion to exhort you to the frequent Participation of the holy Sacrament, I shall, I think, commit no Force at all upon the Text. The Worship the Text invites us to, is the Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving; and such is our Eucharist. The Preparation required in my Text, is Integrity and Innocency; and this is the best Preparation for the Sacrament. And lastly, what mov'd *David* to the frequent Oblation of eucharistical Sacrifices, ought more forcibly to move

move us, namely, the Loving-Kindness of the Lord. For if temporal Favours wrought so much Piety and Gratitude in *David*, how much more ought spiritual Ones in us: Or if he too must be supposed (as undoubtedly he must) to have carried his Meditations beyond the Veil and Type of outward Blessings, yet surely the Redemption wrought by Jesus, could not at that Distance be so conspicuous to him, as now it is to us. I will then from these Words, insist on these two or three Things.

First, I will lay before you those Motives to the holy Sacrament, which may be inferred from the Text.

Secondly, I will shew you what Preparation is necessary for it: *I will wash my hands in innocence.* And

Thirdly, How this Innocence is to be obtained.

The Motives to the Sacrament deducible from the Text, may be Three.

1. The Example of *David*, *I will wash; I will compass thine altar.*
2. We are to consider our partaking of this Sacrament, as an Act of Communion

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nion with God, or a drawing nigh to him.

3. As an Expression of Gratitude.

1. The Example. It is certainly a great Inducement (or ought to be) to this Duty, to consider that no Religion was ever instituted by God without Sacrifice; that under the Patriarchal and Mosaic Oeconomy, their Sacrifices had Relation to that of Christ; that all devout Men in all Ages, like the *Psalmist* here, did offer up their Sacrifices to God constantly, and delighted to do so; that the best Christians in the best Times, did lay a mighty Stress upon this Institution of the holy Sacrament; that looking upon it as their Recognition of Christ being our Lord, as the Test of their christian Profession, and as an acceptable eucharistical Sacrifice to God, they made it always one essential Part of their publick Worship. They look'd upon it as their great Happiness and Advantage thus to offer up their Thanks, their Substance, and themselves (as they always did in this Sacrament) to God: And thus to commemorate, and lay before their heavenly Father, the Sacrifice of the Cross; and in the Virtue and Merit of it, implore his Pardon, and beg his Spirit and his Heaven.

ven. Now certainly, if there be any Force in Example, this ought to have the strongest upon us imaginable. There is nothing in this Example of Humour or Fancy, of Superstition or Will-worship; for 'tis founded in an exprefs Precept of Christ, *Do this in remembrance of me.* 'Tis the Example of Men led by the Spirit of God, and fully acquainted with the Mind of God; 'tis the Example of the best Men, influenced by a firm Faith, by an understanding Zeal, and devout Gratitude. Can we then do better than to imitate such as these? Are we raised so far above them; are we so much perfecter than they, that we stand in no need of that Ordinance; of the Necessity and Excellence of which they have left us such evident Testimonies? Are we more wise and enlightned than they? Do we understand the Design and Purpose of our Master in this Institution better than they did? Or are we so arrogant and self-conceited, as to dare to pretend to a more compendious way, either of obtaining or exercising the Graces of God's Spirit, than this of Christ's own Appointment? Certainly, whatever Shifts and Evasions we may fly to, it must in reality be our Wisdom and Interest, our Duty and Happiness, to follow those who

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walk as Christ himself walk'd, and to place Religion in what they plac'd it; and what this was, we are taught *Acts* ii. and 42. in *sound doctrine*, in *charity*, in *breaking of bread*, and in *prayer*; and in *being frequent and constant in these*.

2. The second Motive to the holy Sacrament is, that it is a drawing nigh to God, or an Act of Communion with him. This was ever the Notion of Sacrifice under the *Old Testament*, and must be so of our eucharistical Sacrifice under the *New*. This we learn from *1 Cor. x. 18. Behold Israel after the flesh; are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?* This in other Places of this Chapter, the Apostle expounds by *Communion and Fellowship with God*, and applies it to the Sacrament. The offering up of Sacrifice, was an Homage and Acknowledgment of the God to whom they offer'd it; God's accepting their Sacrifice, was an owning them for his People; and their eating the Sacrifice before him, did suggest to them all the good Things they were to expect from the Bounty and Munificence of God, and the Joy and Happiness they were to reap from his Protection and Favour: and how much more perfectly, how much more eminently is all this employ'd
and

and verified in the holy Eucharist? Here we have access with Confidence unto God, and an Assurance of all the Benefits that flow from the Death and Mediation of Jesus. When St. John, 1 Epist. i. 3. has told us, *What we have seen, and heard, declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us; and verily our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus;* he adds, v. 4. *These things write I unto you, that your joy may be full.* And no wonder; for how great are the Things included in our drawing nigh unto God? Do we consider what God is? How great the Thunder of his Power; how dazling the Glory of his Majesty; how vast the Fulness of his Bounty; what a Privilege is it to draw nigh to such a Being; and to draw nigh unto him as his People, his Servants, his Favourites, his Children; what Blessedness is this? This Presence of God to his People, is an energetick, gracious, vital Presence; we then, corruptible mortal Creatures, draw nigh to the Spring and Source of Life. We that are dark and foolish, draw nigh to the Light and Wisdom; we impure and defiled, to Perfection and Purity; we desolate and thirsty, to the Fountain of Joy and Pleasure; and when we are thus nigh, we partake

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take of the divine Nature, and thrive and flourish under the benign Influence of God. How stupid then are we, when we shun God; when we fly from him whose Presence makes Heaven? How are we infatuated, when we forsake the fountain of living waters, to hew out to our selves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water? What Value we are to set upon this Communion with God, the Thirst of devout Souls after him, their Sorrows and Complaints upon his Retiring, their Joy and Exultation for his Presence, do abundantly testify. The Psalmist is a full Instance of all this, *Psal. xxvii. 4. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. Psal. xlii. 1, 2. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come to appear before God. Psal. li. 11. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me. Psal. xvi. In thy presence is fulness of joy, &c.* He that feels nothing of this, is, I doubt, a Stranger to true Faith, and a sincere Love of God; or has but very slight and scanty Measures of them.

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But whatever Notion we now have of the Presence and Communion of a propitious God, we shall be sensible what an unspeakable Happiness this is, whenever we fall under the Wounds of Conscience, and the Terrors of God; whenever we are over-run with any Distress or Calamity; whenever Diseases, Death, and Judgment approach; then shall we wish for one of *the days* of the *Son of Man*; then shall we wish that we had in our Prosperity *acquainted our selves with God, and been at peace*; that we had frequently drawn nigh to him in the holy Sacrament, and received repeated Assurances from him, of his being our God.

3. The Sacrament, as the eucharistical Sacrifice was formerly, may be look'd upon as an Act of Gratitude. This is a Topick, that nothing but Infidelity can resist; for certainly, if we owe any Gratitude for Obligations, 'tis impossible we should be wholly destitute of it towards God, if we consider what has been done for us. What could God do more for us, than bestow his Son upon us; and what could the blessed Jesus do more than die for us? If we consider the Advantages accruing to us from hence; what could we aspire after more than Eternal Blessedness? And the Freedom of Divine Love,

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is equal to the Greatness of it : *Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John iv. 10. Nay, we were not only unworthy of his Love, but worthy of his Wrath. If lastly, we consider the Misery from which the Death of Christ has rescued us, there is nothing equal to it, nothing like it : We were corrupted in our Nature, enslaved by vicious Principles, and vicious Customs, obnoxious to the Insults of evil Spirits, overwhelm'd with the Miseries of our present State, condemned to finish our temporal Misery by Sickness and Death, and then to meet that Misery in another World that was never to be finish'd. From this wretched State, Christ by his bitter Death and Passion deliver'd us. Now let any Man reflect on these Things, and be ungrateful if he can ; one would think he could not ; I am sure he must be self-condemned if he be : But if he resolve to be grateful, is there any Expression of his Gratitude that can be more cheap, more easy, more delightful, more advantagious, more honourable to himself, than this which God has chosen, the compassing his Altar, the celebrating the Passion of our Redeemer with festival Joy, with devout Love, with thankful

ful Vows, and with humble and earnest Prayers for the perfecting our Graces, and consummating our Happiness in the Presence of God in Heaven. Ah! whence is it? What can be the Cause that we entertain temporal Benefits with so much Joy and Satisfaction, that we are even ravish'd with the Sense of the Favour, and transported into Thanks and Praise? And yet are so cold and unmov'd, so stupid and insensible, with respect to those which are Spiritual, Heavenly, Eternal! Read the Songs of Victory penn'd by *Moses*, when he had pass'd through the *Red-Sea*, and beheld the *Egyptian* Host swallow'd up by it; or those of *Baruch*, *David*, &c. on like Occasions; in what magnificent Terms do they set forth the Mercy! In what splendid and triumphant Language do they express their Joy! And yet alas, how insignificant and inconsiderable were these Mercies, compared to that of our Redemption! With what Satisfaction and Gratitude do most of us entertain at this Day a temporal Peace; and yet alas! Whatever Profit or Security it may promise us, 'tis a mean and worthless Blessing, if put into the Scale against that Peace, which the Son of God has purchas'd us with his Blood! How is it then that you

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turn your Backs upon the Table of the Lord ; where the Sufferings of Christ are represented ; where our Redemption should be celebrated with Joy and Praise, and from which, we actually derive Strength and Peace, and consequently Victory and Glory? Have we no Sense of our own Misery, of the Love of God, of the Sufferings of Jesus? Have we no Thirst after the Communion of the Spirit? No desire of Heaven? No value for the Peace of our Minds? Have we no Ingenuity? No Gratitude? No Sense of either Duty or Interest? Who would not stand amaz'd at this Hardness of Heart? Ah! with what Words may our Lord justly reproach us? Have I forsook Heaven and the Bosom of my Father for you, and do you prefer your Farms and Yoke of Oxen, or something less considerable and less necessary, before me? Have I pray'd, and watch'd, and travell'd, and hungred, and thirsted for you, and do you prefer your Ease, and your Pleasure, and Diversions before me? Have I suffered Buffeting and Spitting, Scourges, and Thorns, and Agonies for you, and are you hunting after the Honours and the Interests, the Profits and Sensualities of the World, when I demand of you an easy Instance of your Love and Gratitude? How fervently

fervently have I lov'd you? What Blessedness have I obtain'd for you? And to do it, shunn'd not the Reproach and Pain of the Cross. But you prefer your Lusts and Appetites, your Humours and Fancies before me; and refuse me your Love and Obedience, when I require the easiest, the most beneficial, and the most delightful Expressions of them. I appeal now to your own Consciences, what Answer have you to make to these Expostulations? What Defence to these heavy Accusations? I have done with the first Thing, *The Motives to the holy Sacrament*; I am now to proceed, /

2dly, To our Preparation for it; *I will wash my hands in innocence*. I will here do two Things: First, explain the Nature of this Qualification; and next, prove the Necessity of it.

1. What we are to understand by *Innocence*, we may easily learn from the *Psalmist* himself, *Psalm* xix. at the same time that he prays against presumptuous Sin, he does acknowledge his Slips and Errors to be innumerable, *Who can reckon up his Errors?* But yet he comforts himself with the desire and hope of being preserved from *presumptuous Sin*, and in this he places *Innocence*, ver. 13.

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Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me: Then shall I be upright and innocent, from the great transgression. So in this *Psalm* he asserts his Integrity, and through the Conscience of this, encourages himself to trust in God, and assures himself of his Favour; yet in other Places he confesses, *My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head, &c.* And this is the Innocence that fits us for the holy Communion, and entitles us to the Benefits of it. This, the Exhortation in the *Communion Office* does well explain; for after it has advis'd us to examine our selves, and bewail our Sins, and that sincerely, not slightly and superficially; it adds, *Therefore if any of you be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of his word, an adulterer, or be in malice, envy, or any other grievous crime; repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy Table; lest after the taking that holy sacrament, the devil enter into you, as he did into Judas, and fill you with all manner of iniquity, and bring you to destruction both of soul and body.* 'Tis not then the Weakness of our Faith, that unfits us for this Sacrament; 'twas instituted on purpose to strengthen it: 'Tis not the languishing of our Love that unfits us, it was instituted on purpose to en-
flame

flame it: 'Tis not the Faintness or Obscurity of our Hope that unfits us, it was instituted on purpose to confirm and establish it: 'Tis not, in a word, the Scantiness of our Graces and Gifts that unfits us for this Sacrament; it was instituted to convey and communicate more to us; but it is Sin, wilful Sin, living in Sin; 'tis persevering impenitently in Wickedness that unfits and disables us for it.

2. Of the Necessity of this Preparation.

Were there no Texts, either in the *Old Testament* or the *New*, to prove this, yet the Nature of this Thing were reason enough; for how shall they come to the Table of the Lord, who have not on the Wedding Garment? How shall they come to testify their Acknowledgment of a Saviour, who have not received him as such; who have not treated him, either as a Prophet, Priest, or King? How shall they renew or repeat their Covenant of Baptism, who have in a manner renounced or extinguished it; and have no mind to revive it? How shall they bless and praise God for bestowing his Son on the World, or the Son of God for dying to redeem us, who have no Sense of the Misery of a sinful State, nor just value for their Redemption? How, finally, shall

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they represent to God the Sufferings of his Son, and implore his Pardon and Compassion by the Agony and Cross of Christ, who have no Compunction, no Contrition for their Sins, nor any lively Dread of a holy God? Or how shall they petition for that Grace of the Spirit, which Christ has purchased for us, who have no Hunger, no Thirst after Righteousness; who are not sensible, either of the unspeakable Excellence of Grace in it self, or the inexpressible Need they stand in of it? These Things then the impenitent Sinner cannot do; and if he cannot, 'tis impious and impudent for him to *compass the Altar of God*; for it is impossible for him to offer up an *acceptable Sacrifice*: Nay, he must be guilty of such impious Insolence and intolerable Prophana-tion of the holy Sacrament, as cannot but bring down the displeasure of God upon him.

From what I have said, you plainly discern these two Things: 1. That I cannot approve of a Doctrine advanced by some, (*i. e.*) That the Sacrament is a converting Ordinance: If they do not hereby mean, that impenitent unconverted Sinners are to come in their Sins to this holy Table; I confess, I know not what they mean; and

if they mean this, 'tis apparently repugnant to the Sense of ours, and of the whole Catholick Church, to the Doctrines of the holy Scriptures, and to the Nature of the Thing. I invite and press all to come to the Sacrament, who don't live in Wickedness, who believe and repent, how weak and imperfect soever their Graces may be: But farther than this I cannot, I dare not go.

2. You may learn from what I have said, that were there no Discipline to keep notorious Offenders from the holy Table, yet one would think the Church had taken effectual care to attain this, by so fully inculcating this one Doctrine, that the wicked by approaching this Table, do but incur the Displeasure of God, and endanger both their Soul and Body: But the Truth is, every Pastor of a Congregation is by the Rubrick of our Church, impower'd to put an open Offender from the Sacrament: And for this Doctrine there was indeed a Time when it was needful to be insisted on more than now; for at present, wicked Men lie under no Temptation to come to this Sacrament; there is no Interest to bribe them, no Credit or Honour to allure them; for (the more deplorable is our State) Irreligion has so far prevail'd amongst us, that it is no great Matter of

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Reputation to be thought devout and pious; nor shall he find any Reward or Encouragement from the World for being so.

Having thus briefly discoursed of the Nature and Necessity of that Innocence which qualifies us for the holy Sacrament, I proceed,

3dly, To shew you how to attain it; which was the last Thing propos'd. I shall reduce my Advice to these three Rules.

1. Let us take care firmly to believe, and often to reflect on this great Truth, *That God sent his Son into the world to save sinners; that every one that believes and repents shall be saved; but, that he who does not shall be damn'd.* This is a Truth which will not fail to work effectually in us: For can we believe that God would send his Son to suffer Death upon the Cross to atone our Sin, were not Sin an intolerable Evil in it self; were not God an irreconcilable Enemy to it? And can we think that Damnation can imply any thing less than unspeakable Misery, when we consider that it is the Punishment of slighted Mercy, of the Neglect and Contempt of the richest Grace, and most glorious Salvation? And that (in a word) it must

must bear some Proportion to the Nature of Divine Wrath ; that is, to the Eternal Wrath of an Almighty God? Or, who (lastly) can think of the Blessedness and Glory of that Salvation which is to be revealed in the last Day, and be willing to quit all Pretensions to it, for the Gratification of some short, empty, and dishonourable Lust.

2. Enter daily upon these Reflections, That the World passes away, and the Lusts thereof; that the Evils of Life are many; that the best Things of it are empty, uncertain, short; that Death and Judgment come on apace; that yet a little while, and it will signify little, whether we have been Princes or Peasants, Healthy or Crazy, Prosperous or Calamitous; but only whether we have been virtuous or vicious; whether we have made a good or a bad Use of our Trials and Talents. These Things you must seriously ponder; these Things you must often revolve; we perish for want of Thinking; we are lost for want of Consideration. The Truths of the Gospel are mighty and powerful, but 'tis Consideration must set them home: Without serious, without frequent Consideration, no Truth can make either deep or lasting Impression upon us. We
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are earthly, worldly, carnal, and therefore not easily affected or moved. We are silly, inconstant, vain, and therefore apt to forget what is wise and good, and apt to entertain in the room of it, whatever offers itself next, how slight and trifling soever: So that the Things of the Body and the World do easily please, amuse, employ and possess us, if we be not careful often to refresh and renew the Memory of Divine Truths.

3. Have often in your Eye the Examples of *those, who through faith and patience have inherited the promises.* Examples, we commonly say, teach better than Precept; I know not whether they clear and illustrate the Rule, whether they express and explain our Duty better than Words can; but I am sure they affect and move us, or are apt to do so, more than bare Words; there is a Loveliness, a Beauty in Virtue, when rendered visible by Practice, that can scarce fail of exciting in us some Desires and Affections towards it. How lovely does Integrity look, when it triumphs over the Temptations of Interest and Ambition? How comely is Gratitude towards God and Man, when it expresses itself in the best Service it can render either with Love and Joy? What a
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serene Majesty is there in Devotion, when, with *David*, we compass the Altar of God with Joy, and an humble Reverence? When the Purity and Elevation of the Soul breaks out naturally, and whilst it is far from affecting to do so, renders the heavenly Frame and Temper of the Soul illustrious and visible to any serious Spectator? This is one Reason why Examples are said to instruct better than Precepts: But there is another as plain; the Language of Example is not only more lively and moving, but more argumentative and convincing too, than that of Precept; for Example teaches us that our Duty is possible and pleasant; it convinces us that God requires nothing of us, but what is very feasible and practicable, as well as rational and advantageous: And it reproaches our Sloth and Cowardise, our Baseness and Ingratitude, and baffles our vain Pretences and Cavils in the most lively manner: For how shall we refuse to follow, where Men of the same Passions and Infirmities lead the way? With what Face can we object against our Duty, the Unpracticableness or Impossibility of it, when we see others not only actually surmounting all the Difficulties in it, but practising it constantly, with the highest Satisfaction, and by degrees

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grees with great Ease too? How, finally,
must our Conscience severely condemn and
upbraid our Backwardness and Reluctancy,
when we observe with what Eagerness and
Thirst many others follow after Righteous-
ness; what a Trouble 'tis to them to be kept
from doing a religious Duty? And with what
Gust and Pleasure they hasten afterwards
to do it? In a word, the Consideration of
excellent Examples, will naturally be apt to
raise these Thoughts in us; On what ground
can I pretend to the Reward of faithful Ser-
vants, if I do not labour as I see they do?
How can I pretend to the Favour of God,
if my Faith and Love do not produce in me
the same Effects which I see they do in the
Children of God?





SERMON IV.

The Influence of Conversation, with
the Regulation thereof.

PROV. XIII. 20.

*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise;
but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

CONVERSATION has ever justly been accounted a powerful Instrument of Good or Evil; it has ever had a mighty Influence on the Conduct of human Life; and the Vice or Virtue of the World, has ever in a great Measure been owing to it. The Regulation, therefore, of it, did in all Ages demand the utmost Prudence and Caution; but surely in none more, than in this of ours: *Now*, if ever, it is necessary for us to exhort all that have a Concern for their own Souls, to shun the Way of the Sinner, and refrain their Feet from the Path of the Wicked. *Now*, if ever, 'tis necessary for us to exhort all that fear the Lord, to unite and combine themselves for the Defence of
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his Honour, for the Security of their own Souls, and if it be possible, for the giving a check to Sin, and propagating Holiness, in this impious Generation. For now the Number and Confidence of Sinners increases daily; Atheism and Profaneness spread like a Leprosy; there is nothing in Example, nothing in Discourse, that speaks us Christians; we seem to have quitted not only the Morals, but the Principles of the Gospel; and have degenerated so far from the Modesty, Purity, Sanctity and Dignity of Christian Conversation, that the least Air of Seriousness and Gravity, begins to look singular and unfashionable: So that what is worst of all, whilst the Wicked publish their Sin as *Sodom*, and hide it not, Religion seems to want Assurance, to distrust its own Cause, and to be in a manner out of Countenance every-where, but in the Closet and the Temple; and we are in Danger in a little while, to see Men more ashamed of Virtue than of Vice. These are the Reflections which determine me to this Subject. There is nothing obscure in the Text; I am only to mind you, that Wisdom and Goodness, Folly and Sin, are Terms equivalent in the Language of the Scripture, and particularly of this Book of *Proverbs*: And that to
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make up the Antithesis or Opposition between the two Parts of this Verse entire and full, we must read it thus; *He that keeps company with the virtuous and good, will himself be virtuous and happy: But he that keeps company with the vicious, will be vicious and miserable.* The Text then contains these two Propositions.

1. *That Men generally become such as the Company they keep.*
2. *That Happiness is the natural Result or Fruit of Holiness, and Misery of Sin.*

I will therefore, 1. Insist on each of these Doctrines; and then give you two or three Rules for our due Conduct, in Reference to Society.

1. That Men are generally such, as their Acquaintance and Familiars are. This is affirm'd in my Text no less with Reference to good than bad Company: There is one general and plain Reason for this; all Men are naturally Lovers of themselves, and therefore the most effectual way of endearing and obliging one another, is by mutual Respects and Compliances; no Man can make his Court more effectually to another, then by
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falling in with him in Opinion and Practices, approving his Judgment, and observing his Inclinations; this is that which flatters our Self-love, the predominant Principle in our Natures; this is that which renders Society agreeable, and Friendship lasting; which is never to be hop'd for, where Mens Principles and Humours are inconsistent and incompatible: E're we can be pleas'd ourselves, or please others, we must be mutually fashion'd and moulded into an Agreement and Conformity of Principles and Morals, we must be act'd and govern'd by the same Affections and Inclinations, and mov'd and led by the same Desires and Passions. This is so far the universal Sense of Mankind, that it has escap'd no bodies Observation; all act and judge by this Rule; we estimate Men by the Intimacies they maintain; and he is thought to have forfeited all Pretension to good Sense, or good Breeding, who does not stifle those Sentiments, and suppress those Inclinations which are apt to shock the Company he is in, or give any Disturbance or Disgust to his Friends. From hence the Proposition laid down follows with undeniable Evidence, *That Men are generally such as their Companions are*: For that Society will soon be dissolv'd, where
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we reap no Satisfaction from it; and we can reap none where there is no Agreement in our Notions and Inclinations.

But that this Truth, which is of the highest Consequence, may be the more deeply imprinted, I will proceed to a more distinct and particular Illustration of it: And first, of the Influence good Company has on us towards making us wise and good; there are two Things in wise Men, which never fail to work upon their Friends and Acquaintance: First, Good Discourse; Secondly, Good Examples.

First then, as to good Discourse; how manifest is the Tendency of this? What Light, what Strength, what Pleasure does it minister? How does it awaken the Conscience, and purify the Heart? How does it quicken us when we languish? How does it recall and reduce us, when we begin to forget our selves, and lay aside a wise Sobriety of Mind and holy Fear? How does it raise us when we sink and grovel, and how often does it kindle in us wise Desires, and holy Purposes? Thus *Solomon* observes, *That the lips of the wise disperse knowledge*, Prov. xv. 7. and the *New Testament* tells us, concerning this kind of Discourse, that it *ministers grace to the bearer*; that it *edifies*

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and builds us up in our holy faith: And the Disciples going to *Emmaus*, remark what Life and Spirit there was in the Conversation of our Lord, *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talk'd to us on the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?* Luke xxiv. 32.

Now, though no Words can ever be impregnated with the same Force and Energy with which our Lord's were; yet, certainly, when God and our great Mediator, when the Riches of Divine Grace, when Righteousness and Heaven are the Subject of our Discourse, when our Language flows from the Heart, and is animated by a vital and experimental Sense of that we talk of, when it has all the Advantages which a true Friendship, and a known Integrity, and the most favourable Opportunities can give it: Such Discourse can never fail of moving and affecting us.

From Discourse I pass on to Example; and here, 'tis certain, that Virtue never appears so beautiful and lovely, as in Action: That it is represented with much more Life, in the Practice of a wise and good Man, than it can be in Rules and Precepts; that the Notions we form of Duty from the Lives of others, are generally more correct and just, than those which we form, even from the
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Scriptures themselves; for we are apt to bend and accommodate the Rule a little in favour of our selves, but we never do so in favour of others. That the Excellencies and Perfections of a Friend, are very strong Incitements to Emulation, and very sensible Re-proofs of our Remisness, and comparative Barrenness and Unprofitableness; and on the other Side, his Defects are excellent Lessons of Caution and Watchfulness. 'Tis, *lastly*, certain, that whatever Beauty and Loveliness there be in Virtue, it receives a new Accession from the Example of my Friend, whose Integrity I know; and the Esteem and Affection I have for him, is apt to beget in me a Value for every Thing he approves, and inclines me to be pleas'd with what he does. But these Arguments are too many, and too copious to be dwelt on; I content my self therefore only to have mention'd them, and will lay before you but this one single Consideration: A good Life in a Companion, is certainly a mighty Motive and Encouragement to us; for while we behold our Friends discharging the Parts of good *Christians*, we see in them not only what we ought to do, but what we may do. Whatever is possible to them, is possible to us too; for they are clad with the same Frailties and Passions,

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expos'd to the same Temptations, and have no other Assistances than what we have, or may have. In them we have plain Demonstration of the Truth and Power of Religion; we can no longer imagine that Faith is a meer Speculation or Amusement, or Virtue a meer Pretence or Name; under these Convictions we shall either come to a Resolution our selves to do our Duty, or shall suffer the daily Reproaches of our own Minds. This is the natural Influence of Example; it instructs, it reproves, exhorts, and if it do not prevail, it condemns. Thus St. Paul, Heb. xii. 1. *Wherefore, being compass'd about with such a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset us: And let us run with patience the race that is set before us.* Where the Apostle plainly teaches us, that if the Faith and Patience of Martyrs and Confessors, do not move us to imitate their Virtues, they will certainly serve to upbraid and condemn us at the last Day. And certainly the Examples of the Living, and those our Familiars and Friends, cannot but have as much Force and Power in them, as those of the Dead: Nay, much more, for the Reasons I have already suggested. Will not our own Hearts be apt to reason thus with us on every Reflection

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we make on the Virtues of our Friend? What am I doing? Can he and I go to the same Place at last? He pursues a Crown by Works of Faith, and shall I obtain it by Works of Darknes? He seeks a Heaven by the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope; and shall I gain it by Sloth and Idleness, by Sensuality and Looseness? He mortifies the Body, while I indulge it; he prays and contends, and passes his Life in holy Fear, while I am careless and unconcerned about a future State. His Conduct is regular, his Discourse heavenly, the bent of his Soul is toward that which is good: But how little do I mind these Things? How hard is it for me not to let him see that I am wholly set upon the Pleasures and Profits of this World? What do I mean? Am I indeed in the Right, and he in the Wrong; is Religion, indeed, but a well devised Fable? Alas! I see the contrary. I see that there is Truth and Reason on his Side; I cannot but reverence him, and think him happy; I cannot but own that he follows his Reason, I my Lust and Fancy. How uneasy these kind of Soliloquies must be, and how naturally they will end, either in reforming our Follies, or in breaking off and

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quitting a Conversation which gives us so much Trouble, you cannot but see.

I have done with the *Influence of good Company*. I am next to consider *that of bad*. This Subject, after what I have in general said, does not require long insisting on. Daily Experience is too plain, too sad a Proof of this Truth, that Sin is catching and infectious: That human Nature is so prone to Evil, that it needs very little Temptation or Encouragement to it: That ill Principles and Practices are soon propagated; and if they find any Countenance and Approbation from those we converse with, they will easily bear down all the Opposition which the Modesty of a Civil Education, the weak Impressions of Reputation or Decency, or the Checks of natural Reason can raise against them; nay, Holiness itself, unless well grown, and deeply rooted, can scarcely resist the Contagion which ill Company spreads. *Can a man* (saith Solomon) *take fire into his bosom, and his cloaths not be burnt?* Prov. vi. 27. And *evil communication* (saith St. Paul) *corrupts good manners,* 1 Cor. xv. But we shall be more sensible of the pernicious Effects of ill Company, if we consider these two or three Things.

I. Sin

I. Sin is the Cement of the Friendships and Intimacies of Sinners; Vice is the Subject of their Conversation, and some Sensuality or other, makes up the Diversion and Entertainment of such Company. And how can it be otherwise? *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, Matth. xii. 32. What can the Mouth utter but Sin and Folly, when the Heart is full of Wantonness, Lust, Pride, Envy, Ambition, Sottishness or Vanity? What but polluted Streams can flow from a polluted Fountain? What but Evil, can an Evil Man bring forth out of the *evil treasure of the heart*? Matth. xii. 35. How hard is it then, even for a good Man, to maintain the Charity and Dignity of his Mind, where Censures and Slanders, malicious Wit, or Trifling and Impertinence, make up the Conversation? How hard is it, even for such a one, to preserve the Purity and Sobriety of his Mind? Where Riot and Luxury is the Business they meet about; where Pride and Ostentation of Life is the only Thing admired; and nothing has any Savour in it, that is Wise or Good, Devout or Humble. And if a virtuous Person can, in such Company, scarce keep his Ground, how easily are those born away by the Stream, who are of themselves but

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too prone to Evil, and too fond of Temptation.

2. Ill Company does naturally instil and propagate vicious Principles, worldly Maxims, sensual, carnal Improvements: Here we are furnished with Objections against God and Providence, with Excuses and Apologies for Sin; here we learn to ridicule Religion and Conscience, and dispute our selves out of all Sense and Duty. 'Tis of this sort of Communication St. *Paul* speaks, when he saith, *That it corrupts good manners.* And at this Day, those Errors which fret like a Canker, and consume every Thing that is wise and serious in us, have multiplied so beyond Measure, that they are no longer the Enclosure of some few Pretenders to Freedom and Reason, but the foolishest and meanest, as well as the most vicious Part of Mankind, are deeply ting'd with them.

3. Ill Company creates Confidence in Sin. A Custom of talking unconcernedly and loosely, does naturally make way for Carelessness and Liberty in our Actions; and if we repeat either often, we shall soon grow bold and stupid in Sin; for if we neglect to make any Reflection upon our Words or Actions, we shall be insensibly

betrayed into a Hardness of Heart; or if (what is worse) we be driven by the Reproaches of our Conscience upon Reflection, to take Sanctuary in the Cheats and Impostures, whether Vulgar or more Refin'd, which Sinners are wont to put upon themselves, we shall soon sink into Prophaneness and Atheism. Having thus unfolded to you the Truth of the first Proposition, and shew'd you that Men become such as their Company; I am next to proceed to the

2. *That happiness is the fruit of wisdom, and misery of folly.* Men may flatter themselves as they please, and delude themselves with vain Words; they may call the Proud and Rich happy; they may admire the prosperous Sinner, and in a senseless Fit applaud themselves in their vicious Pleasures; but they must bid Defiance, not only to Revelation, but even Reason and Experience too, e're they can promise themselves a true and lasting Satisfaction in any thing but Virtue. Revelation tells us plainly, *that godliness, and that only, has the promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,* 1 Tim. ii. 8. *That if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; but*
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if through the spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live, Gal. vi. 8. That we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that we may receive according to what we have done in the body, whether it be good or evil, 2 Cor. v. 10. And both Reason and Experience, as well as Revelation, tells us, that Sin is fruitless and dishonourable, Rom. vi. 21. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed. That there is no peace to the wicked: That they are like a troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, continually throwing up its own mire and dirt, Isa. lvii. 20. That the Miseries and Calamities of Life spring from Sin; that Sin blasts our Enjoyments and Possessions; that it gives a Sting and Edge to all our Miseries and Misfortunes: For if we did not dote upon the Body and the World, the Evils of Life could not wound us so deeply. In a word, Revelation, Reason, Experience assure us, that Righteousness fills the Mind with Peace and Joy; that Sin tortures it with Contradictions and unreasonable Passions, with the Guilt and the Terrors of the Lord; and, what think we must be the result of both in another World? In the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Rom. viii. 5. Must the Nature of Things be alter'd,

ter'd, that the Sinner may be sav'd? Must Religion be an Imposture, that Madness and Folly may prove Wisdom? Must Reason be a meer Amusement, that Lust and Fancy may be infallible Guides? Must the Judgment of another World contradict all our Sense and Experience in this? That little Railery and Sophistry of the loose and vicious Part of Mankind, may prove the only Thing that has Solidity and Weight in it? These are Things too absurd and ridiculous to be fancied. I will enlarge no longer on a Truth which is controverted by none, except the Prophane and Atheistical; but will on to the third Thing proposed;

3. *To give you some Advice for your better Conduct, as to Society or keeping Company.* This may be reduced to three Heads.

1. *We must be very cautious what Company we keep.*
2. *We must endeavour to make the best Use of it.*
3. *We must be fully persuaded, that the due Government of our selves in this Point, is a matter of the highest moment.*

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1. As to the first Rule, we must reject the Authority of Scripture, if we refuse to observe it; for this expressly forbids us to associate our selves with the wicked and vicious, *Prov. iv. 14, 15. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away.* 2 Thes. iii. 6. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw your selves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.* 1 Cor. v. 11. *But now I have written unto you not to keep company; if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, do not eat.* Nor do the Examples of holy Men deviate in this Point, from the Precepts and Exhortations of the Spirit. *Psal. xxvi. 4, 5. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked.* *Psal. cxix. 63. I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and them that keep thy precepts.* And thus it was with other good Men; they did equally covet good, and shun evil Company. Thus *Mal. iii. 16. When wickedness abounded,*
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with the Regulation thereof. 101

ed, then they that feared the Lord talk'd often one to another. And in the first Times of Christianity, great was the Intimacy and Dearness of the Disciples of Jesus one with another; great was their Abhorrence of all the Works of Darknes, and all Communion and Fellowship with those that practis'd them, as may easily be inferr'd from Acts ii. and iii. and other Places of holy Writ. The Scripture then is plain in this Point: And from what I have said, it appears that Reason is so too, unless we can think that Wisdom and Folly, Happiness and Misery, are Things indifferent.

But here 'twill be objected, at this rate we shall soon find our selves oblig'd to renounce the World, and quit all Company. Is not our Case much the same with that which St. Paul puts, 1 Cor. v. 9, 10. *I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the fornicators of the world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world.* To this I answer, 1. Be it granted, as the Objection supposes, that we must keep ill Company or none; in this Case, I affirm it is far better to keep none. Retirement is not so dreadful a thing to a Christian as some think; the

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the Calm and Peace of the Mind is much more desirable than Noise and Laughter; and the Quiet and Regularity of Privacy much to be preferred before the Sensuality and Confusion of vicious Company. Nor need any one complain of the uncomfortableness of Solitude, who can converse when he pleases with Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles; nay, with God and his Son Jesus. A good Man may meet God like *Isaac in the Fields*, or *Moses in the Desert*; he may enjoy Communion with him, like *David in his Bed-chamber*, or *Joseph in the Dungeon*. The Promise, *John xii. 23.* is not limited to Place; *If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* But on the other Hand, in the Company of the Wicked we shall never find God, nor never feel any Effects of his gracious Presence; but shall be exposed to the Attempts and Practices of evil Spirits, and to the Contagion of Vice. The Wise Man observes, that it is better to live alone, than with a Companion of a rough, intractable, and exasperating Temper: But I am sure there can be no Company, how froward and rough soever, so fatal to our Happiness, as that which instills Vanity under

der the Advantages and Opportunities of Friendship: No Solitude can be so dismal or unacceptable, as that Society which infects the Heart, or darkens the Understanding; no Provocation or Insolence can be half so injurious, as that Conversation which tends to Softness or Debauchery, to the betraying us into a Love of this World, and a Forgetfulness of God.

2. This Objection may have some Colour in a *Pagan* or a *Jewish* World, but sure it has none in a Christian one. The Church of Christ is not yet left like a Cottage in a Vineyard; our *Jerusalem* is not yet degenerated to the degree of *Jerusalem* of old, when God spoke thus of it in the Prophet, *Jer. v. 1. Run ye through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad streets thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, &c.* Nor need we yet pray with the Psalmist, *Psal. i. 12. Help, O Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.* For the Servants of God are yet numerous; nor are they driven to their secret Chambers, or to the Wilderness, or ashamed to own their Lord and Saviour,

or

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or to make an open Profession of the Hope that is in them.

I grant, will you say, that there are good Christians, but they are not easily, they are not every where to be found; but the Worshipers of Pleasure do every where swarm, every where haunt us. There is an easy Remedy for this; do thy Duty with an humble and unaffected Confidence, with a steady and unalterable Resolution: Put on the Garb of a Disciple; let the Air of a Christian appear in every Thing that thou doest, or sayest; let the Brightness and Beauty of Holiness, that enriches and adorns the Soul, break forth ever and anon in thy Conversation; and thou shalt soon see that the Good will love thee, but the Wicked will forsake thee: They will shun thee, as Ghosts are said to do the Light and Day; or as Hypocrites and Profligates did the Society of the first Christians; and of the *rest durst no man join himself unto them*, Acts v. 13. Thou dost too much accommodate thyself to the Modes and Humours of the World, and this draws upon thee the Company of the Impertinent and Vicious; 'tis an earthly vanishing Splendor, about which these Moths and Night-flies flutter:

'Tis

'Tis Jet, not Gold and Diamond, that is said to attract Straws.

3. But lastly, This Rule obliges us only as far as we can (the nearness of Relation or necessary Business, does sometimes make it our Duty to converse with those which we otherwise would decline; and in this Case all that can be expected is) not to have any Fellowship or Communion with them in their Vices, but to discountenance or reprove them: And as the World goes now, I think this Rule is to be extended no farther than to Intimacies and Familiarities, to voluntary and chosen Acquaintance; not to accidental Meetings, or occasional Correspondencies. But we must take care not to be too favourable and compliant in this Matter; the more Sin abounds, the less Discipline is, or can be exercised, the more zealous should we be in particular to do Honour to Religion, and to fix a Mark of Shame and Infamy upon Vice. Never is this Rule more scandalously transgress'd, then when Priests and Prelates court the Company and Favour of Atheists and Adulterers; or Matrons and Virgins that of a wretched Woman, whose State and Port is not more notorious than the Shame and Lewdness that maintain it. How can our

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Wives or Daughters think that there is any Shame or Turpitude in the Sin, when we pay so much Respect to the Sinner?

2. We must consider what ought to be the true End and Design of Society and Conversation among Christians. Certainly that Man has a very mean and low Notion of Friendship, who proposes no other End than to eat and to drink together, or to laugh and fool away our precious Moments. The Scripture points out to us much nobler Purposes and Designs of Conversation, when it tells us, that our Speech should be such *as may administer Grace*; that we should *build up one another in our holy faith*; that we should *comfort one another, exhort one another continually*, and so much the more, because *the day approaches*, &c. And surely we are strangely mistaken, if we think that our Communication will lose all Gust by being directed to one of these Ends. On the contrary, it would doubtless be as much more delightful as beneficial, if when we meet we were accustomed, instead of Censures and Reflections, News and Impertinence, or Frothiness and Lightness, to discourse of some worthy and noble Subject, becoming the Genius and Hope of a Christian. The Example of *David* confirms
this

this Notion; he try'd and found that Friendship was both useful and pleasant, whilst it was maintain'd on the Stock of Religion; *My companion, my guide, my familiar friend; we took sweet counsel together, and walk'd into the house of God in company,* Psal. lv. 14, 15.

To this it will be again objected, It will be very difficult at all Times to find Matter and Occasion for good Discourse. I answer, *First*, I do not utterly and totally exclude the common Accidents of Life, the Business and Affairs of it; nay, even Things of a pleasant and divertive Nature, if modest and inoffensive, from being sometimes the Subject of Conversation; but, I say, Religion ought to be the main and great End of it. *Secondly*, 'Tis hard for me to conceive how a good Christian should often want either Matter or Opportunity for pious Discourse. As for Matter, he must suffer the Providences of God to pass without any Observation or Remark; he must be a Stranger to the Works of Nature; he must be utterly unread in the History of human Affairs; he must be unacquainted with the Book of God; and he must have little Experience

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of the Power and Operation of God's Word and Spirit upon his own Soul; he must have reflected very little on the Wiles of Satan, the Temptations of the World, and the Defects and Weaknesses of human Nature, who can want Matter for good Discourse. The Man of Letters, the Man of Business, the Man of Pleasure, never wants Matter; Books furnish the one, Business the other, and their Vices and Diversions the third: 'Tis strange that the Christian alone should be barren. The Christian, who is a Child of the Light, and of the Day, and should abound in Wisdom and Understanding. The Christian, who has every Hour Matters of the highest Importance on his Hands! And who, finally, is entertain'd with more and richer Pleasures than the most fortunate *Epicurean* can pretend to. As to Occasion or Opportunity of good Discourse, did the Heart run that way, every thing would afford it us. But alas! we rather shun than seek Occasions: And I know not by what strange Error we have banish'd all Matters of Religion out of Company; as if nothing but Ignorance or Affectation could make a Man so impertinent, as to talk of any Thing that were pious and good.

I beseech you to consider, whether this be not a very near Approach to the being ashamed of Christ; and if it be, how shall we escape that dreadful Sentence which is denounced against it, *Mark viii. 38. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this wicked and adulterous Generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.* This minds me of the

3d, and last Direction, which is, *That we must be thoroughly persuaded that the right Conduct of our selves, in the point of Society, is a matter of the highest Moment and Importance.* Does not the Scripture plainly suggest this, when our Saviour tells us, *Mat. xii. That by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned.* And St. James tells us, *James iii. 2. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.* And 'tis no wonder the Scripture lays so great a Stress, or sets so great a value on the due Government of the Tongue, since nothing tends more to the pleasing of God, to the Honour and Interest of Religion, and to the forming the Morals of Men. As to this latter, the forming every Man's particular Manners,

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I have said enough : One Thing here I will only remark ; never was there a more illustrious Proof of the Efficacy of religious Conversation, than in the primitive Times. Next to that of the Spirit of God it self, the Christians found no greater Support under all their Trials, than what they derived from their mutual Encouragements and Exhortations of one another. And I do not question, but that religious Friendship would be as useful now to preserve us against the Snares and Pleasures of Sin, as it was then to uphold them under their fiery Trials and Afflictions, were our Discourses now actuated by the same Spirit theirs were then. As to the pleasing God, must not God, think you, be as well pleas'd with our talking of, and magnifying his wondrous Works, in our familiar Conversations with one another, as with our praising or extolling him in our Closets ; and must not the Regard and Reverence which we testify for him in Company, be as acceptable to him as our private Adorations ? Spring they not from the same Principle, and is not the one as subservient (to say no more) to his Glory as the other ? As to the Honour and Interest of Religion, nothing can more effectually promote it

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than

with the Regulation thereof: III

than the giving a frequent and publick Testimony of our Value for it. Which way can we more clearly convince the World of the Excellency and Virtue of it; which way can we more effectually propagate in one another the Love of it, than by making it appear, that it, has moulded and form'd our Souls into the Image of God; that it has possessed our Thoughts, and refined our Conversation? But on the other Hand, if we have no Regard to our Talk, if we think this a Matter which Conscience is not concerned in, we shall soon see Religion daily lose Ground; for we shall soon learn to think and act with the same Liberty we talk; and this will introduce a strange Face of Things in a little Time.

Now to close all; If our Care or Unconcernment in this Point, be of this vast Consequence, we cannot but think we shall be call'd to a strict Account about it, in another World; the Day is coming, when the Lord will fulfil his Promise, *Mal. iii. And the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written; and they shall be mine saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels.* The Day is coming when God will execute the Threat denounced in

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the Apostle Jude, Behold the Lord cometh
with ten thousand of his saints, to execute
judgment upon all, to convince all that are
ungodly amongst us, of all their ungodly deeds
which they have ungodlily committed; and of
all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners
have spoken against him.



S E R M-



SERMON V.

Joy, Peace, and Hope, the Christian's
Portion here.

ROM XV. 13.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Surely Religion was designed to regulate our Passions, as well as instruct our Understandings, and to make us happy, as well as wise. Nor is this Happiness to consist in the Tranquility only, but Pleasure of the Mind; not in *Peace* only, but *Joy* too: A Joy, not like that of the Worldling, which at best is confined to Time, and must die with the Body, or it may be, long before it; but a holy spiritual Joy, flowing from unspeakable Advantages in Possession, and the certain Prospect of far greater in Reversion; for this is one great Branch of the Christian's Happiness, that he abounds
in

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in *Hope*: A *Hope* worthy of God, the Author of it, who is the *God of Hope*; worthy of the Blood of Christ, the Price and Foundation of it; worthy the Gospel, which is the Wisdom and the Power of God; and of that blessed Spirit which prepares us for it, by the Communication of the Divine Nature: A *Hope*, in a word, which despising all beneath, grows up as high as Heaven, and extends it self to all Eternity.

And yet, though this be the great End and Design of Religion, in the midst of what Discontents do we live? With what Fear and Perplexity do we die? Are not our Passions, and consequently our Troubles, as numerous and violent as those of *Jew* or *Gentile*? Now, I wish from my Heart they were not, and that this Reflection were rather a bold Censure, than so sad a Truth. But let not the Sin of the Professors reflect any Disparagement on our Profession: This happens not from any Defect or Insufficiency in our Holy Religion, to compass that glorious End it proposes, but from the Lust and Folly of its Profelytes; we place our Happiness in the Things of this World, we seek for our Satisfaction in earthly Enjoyments, in Wealth and Honour, Luxury or Love, in Mirth and Gaiety. And since
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the Christian's Portion here. 115

the Things which are seen are empty, temporal, uncertain, the dearest Persons frail and mortal, what Wonder if the Soul, which is fix'd on these, be fill'd with Fears and Cares, Discontents and Sorrows? But if our *Joy* and *Hope* were grounded upon the Things which are Eternal; if our Comforts were derived from above, from the Influences of the Divine Spirit; or from within, from the Calm and Peace of an undisturb'd Conscience; if our Souls were taken up in the Meditation of the great Truths which God hath revealed to us; if our Delight were plac'd in the Practice of Purity, Devotion and Charity, then we should experience the Pleasures of Religion, and we should find it to be our great Happiness to be true Christians: For God, even *the God of Hope*, would fill us, &c.

There is but one Difficulty in the Sense of the Text, *viz.* this Expression, *that you may abound in Hope*, seems to make *Hope* the Fruit of *Joy* and *Peace*; when on the contrary, *Joy* and *Peace* is rather the Fruit of *Hope*. But this Difficulty will be easily remov'd, if we consider, *First*, That *Joy*, *Peace* and *Hope* do mutually beget and cherish one another; for as the Hope of God's Favour and eternal Life, is a good Ground
of

116 *Joy, Peace, and Hope,*

of Joy and Peace; so Joy and Peace, when they are such as they should be, are good Proofs of our Sincerity, and the Influence of God's Spirit on us, and consequently strengthen and confirm our Hope. Or, *Secondly*, That the Text does not speak barely of *Hope*, but *abounding in Hope*. Now, 'tis certain that the Peace of Christ, and Joy of the Holy Ghost, increases our Love of, and Delight in Spiritual Things, inflames our Gratitude and Zeal towards God and our Lord Jesus, and fills the Mind with fresh Vigor and Resolution; and these produce those Fruits of Righteousness, which raise and improve our Hope into full Assurance, or a well-grounded Confidence.

These Words may be resolv'd into these two Propositions:

- I. *That God is the God of Hope, or the inexhaustible Fountain of Joy, Peace and Hope.*
- II. *That he produces these in us, or confers them upon us, by his Gospel and his Spirit.*

I. *That God is the God of Hope, &c.* Religion seems to me to be nothing else, but a
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sincere Dependance upon God in the Pursuit and Attainment of true Happiness; and consequently the great Foundation of it, must be the Belief of his All-sufficiency. Without this *Faith*, 'tis impossible to please him; no Man will come to God, unless he believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all those who diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6. This is that which God inculcates to Abraham, *I am the Almighty, or All-sufficient God, El Shaddai.* And this is that which our State and Nature every Moment puts us in Mind of; our Wants and Necessities, our Weaknesses and Imperfections, do sufficiently convince us that we have no All-sufficiency in our selves; that we cannot derive from our selves any solid or lasting Happiness; and one would think the Uncertainty and the Vanity, not to say with Solomon, the Vexation of Temporal Possessions, the Number and Weight of the Evils, we are at all Times, and in all Places liable to, were enough to convince us that we cannot find it neither in the Things without us. He that denies this, must be concluded to make no Reflection on the Baffles and Disappointments of the Cunning, Covetous, and Ambitious; the wanton and humorous Discontents, or real Crosses of the most Prosperous and

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and Fortunate; on the sudden and unexpected Deaths of the Presumptuous and Confident, the Easy and Voluptuous: All which put together, shew us plainly, that nothing less can be sufficient to raise and secure human Happiness, than God, an Almighty God; for what less can reform and restore lapsed, corrupted Nature? What less can raise us above our Dotage on the World, which must be attended with a thousand Troubles? What less can procure our Tranquility and Security, amidst so many Changes and Revolutions? What less than God, can support us under all the Evils that befall us, and fortify us against Death it self? Who but God, and such a God, an Almighty, All-sufficient one, can ascertain us an Immortality, Resurrection, an Eternity? In one word, who but God, and such a God, can promise any Thing becoming the Dignity of human Nature, durable and worthy of a Being *created but a little lower than the Angels?*

I am not ignorant that there are some, who may smile at this as meer Notion and Speculation; who understand no Happiness beyond their present Enjoyments; who would have us count them happy, and it may be, in some short Fits of Sensuality
count

count themselves so; but ah! let but any Disaster, any Judgment overtake one of these, and how do these Fancies and Confidences vanish like a Dream? You may easily observe of them, what *Livy* has done of *Hospitalius*, that they are not more atheistical in their Prosperity, than superstitious in their Afflictions; not more vain and insolent in the one, than poor, shrunk, broken, blasted Things in the other. A glorious Happiness this, to which Sin and Folly advances Men! when their best Condition deserves the Pity, and their worst, if Christianity would permit it, the Scorn of a wise Man. The Proposition then remains unshaken, *That God alone is the Fountain or Foundation of a lasting and rational Joy, Peace and Hope.* And yet we are not much to wonder, if Men, rash and inconsiderate in their Choice, impotent in their Lusts, do seek their Pleasure, or place their Hope and Confidence in worldly Things. Thus it was with *Israel* when they were Full, Fat, and at Ease; a Stock or Stone, a molten Calf served their Turn, as well as the living God, the God of Heaven and Earth. But when the Storms and Calamities gathered and thicken'd from every Coast; *When fear came upon them as desolation, and destruction as a whirlwind;*
when

when distress and anguish came upon them, then they burnt their Idols, and digg'd down their Altars, and cried unto the true and living God. Ah! may it never happen to us, to any one of us, as it did finally to them; God laugh'd at their calamity, and mock'd when their fear came; they call'd upon him, but he would not answer, they sought him early, but he would not be found, Prov. i. To prevent which, as much as lies in me, and to persuade you to a sincere and seasonable seeking of God, I will lay before you the blessed Fruits of it, shewing you,

II. *That God produces in such as do so, Joy, Peace and Hope; which was my Second Proposition. This he does two Ways; by his Gospel, and his Spirit.*

1. *By his Gospel. The direct and immediate Design of the Gospel is to effect a blessed Change in our Nature, and our Fortune. Wherein this Change consists, our Saviour has told us in very few, but very full Words, Acts xxvi. 18. where he sends St. Paul to the Gentiles, to open the eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan, to the service of the living God. This I call a Change in our Nature: Then it follows, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them*
which

which are sanctified by faith that is in me.
This I call a Change in our State or Fortune. My Business then must be to shew you how *Joy, Peace and Hope*, do naturally result from this Change: That of our Nature, consisting, as you see, of two Parts, ~~the~~ Illumination of our Minds, and Conversion of our Hearts.

I will, 1. consider the Influence of the former of these, *i. e. Illumination*. If Knowledge be 'delightful to the Mind of Man, if the Thirst of it be so natural, I cannot think why the Gospel, even on this Account, should not affect us with an extraordinary Pleasure; for it is the richest and brightest Manifestation that God did ever vouchsafe the World: It contains a System of the most glorious and most important Truths. In what Writings have we ever had so full and just an Account of human Nature, and of our truest Interests in this and another World? Where was there ever to be found such Evidence and Demonstration of the Certainty, or so lively and rational a Description of the State and Nature of another Life? Where do we meet with any Truths of such a surprising Nature, and vast Moment, as are the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the blef-

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fed Jesus, the Effusion of the Holy Spirit, and its wonderful Operation in miraculous and sanctifying Graces? Here we read of the Nature and Office of Angels, the Apostacy, Misery and Stratagems of Devils, the Fall and Recovery of Man, the various Revolutions of Religion, and the different Fate of Mankind. If we come to Practical Matters, never before was the Duty of Man so plainly describ'd, or his Obligations to it so fully discover'd, and passionately urged; never was Virtue so effectually promoted and secured by such a Divine Model of Government, such infallible Rules and Counsels, and such wise and efficacious Sacraments; and if there be any Thing in that excellent Thought of *Tully*, that Virtue, if it could be seen with bodily Eyes, would captivate and ravish the World; never was it drawn so much to the Life, as in the Conversation of the Holy Jesus; never did it appear in such native Simplicity, and genuine Beauty, in so much Sweetness and Majesty. In one word, never was the Glory of God under any Dispensation so evidently display'd to the World, as under that of the Gospel; and never did the Power, Love, and manifold Wisdom of God appear so illustrious, I will not say to Men only, but to the Angels

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gels themselves, as in the *Redemption of the world by Jesus*, Eph. iii. 10. And they accordingly did express their Resentments of this Revelation, in Joy and Wonder, in Doxologies and Raptures, as appears from several Passages in the *New Testament*. Ah! why should those Truths, in which we have infinitely the bigger Interest, so coldly affect us, and yet transport them? It happens, 'tis true, amongst us, with Reference to these Truths, as it is wont to do to the richest Blessings, that Commonness and Familiarity breed a Neglect, if not a Contempt of them; but 'tis certain that the Pagan World, as many as did believe, entertain'd the Gospel with the same Surprize and Joy, with which the Man *born blind* in the Gospel did the Light, when cured by our Saviour's Almighty Word; a glorious Day broke in upon him, and a new World open'd to his View various Scenes of Delight and Wonder; for I persuade my self, that the Face of Nature in the old Creation, could not appear nigh so strange to him, as that of the new Creation did to the poor Pagans, who before *sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death*. Let no one object against all this, That the Style of the Gospel is rude and unpolish'd; that the manner of

conveying these Truths does diminish the Pleasure which might otherwise spring from them, while it seems to lessen the Opinion of their being dictated by God: For, First, he must have but a very superficial Sense of Things, whose Mind is diverted from the Contemplation of glorious and important Truths, by the Ruggedness or Hardships of the Language in which they are communicated. In the next Place, I must affirm, that this Objection can be made by none but such as are Strangers to the Gospel; for though there be not in it a thin Garnish, or tinsel'd Eloquence, which would have been unbecoming its Author and Subject, there is yet in it that Perspicuity and Force, that Dignity and Majesty which is sufficient on this very Account, to create in any Man of an unprejudic'd or solid Judgment, a Veneration for it; and it has pleased God so to mix Light and Shades, Figures and plain Speech, Revelation and Mystery, that there is abundantly enough to entertain the Contemplation, and invite the Search and Study of Men of the most different Capacity, Genius and Education.

But after all, I do not mean by all this, that the *Joy, Peace and Hope*, in my Text, is to flow from the meer Knowledge or Speculation

culatation of the Gospel. In vain are the highest Attainments of this Kind, unless we add to *Knowledge Virtue*, and to the *Illumination* of the Mind, the *Conversion* of the Heart; which is the second Part of this Change of our Nature, and compleats the New Creature, which St. *Peter* truly calls *a participation of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 2. All the Principles, Precepts and Promises of the Gospel, are such as tend, not only to the enlightning our Minds, but also the purifying our Souls, to the calming our Passions, regulating our Actions, and influencing and steering the whole Course of our Lives; so that to be truly a Christian, is to be truly good; and to be endowed with a true Faith, is to be charitable, meek, devout and heavenly-minded, to despise this World, and to practise in every State what is Praise-worthy, and of good Report. And is it possible, think you, for any Man to live thus, and not to abound in *Joy*, *Peace* and *Hope*? Can he be thus virtuous, and yet uneasy or discontented? Can he be like God, and yet miserable? It is impossible; for Goodness is the Source of Happiness, and Virtue the most solid Foundation of Pleasure. One would think this should be very plain, and like the Sentences of the Anci-

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ents, should carry their Conviction and Authority in them: If otherwise, I beseech you consult your Reason and Experience, and you will not long dispute, whether the right way to Happiness be, to be Masters of a great Fortune, or a solid Virtue; to satisfy our boundless Desires, or to reduce them; to gratify our inordinate Passions, or to vanquish them. But nothing will clear this Point so well, as a short Reflection on the Tendency of the particular Virtues of the Gospel; and to this Purpose, I will chuse those our Saviour deliver'd on the Mount. The first then is *Poverty of Spirit*. Now which is more likely to procure our Rest and Contentment, Protection and a Blessing? Humility and Dependance upon God, or Pride and Self-confidence? *Modesty* and *Lowliness of Mind*, or *Covetousness* and *Ambition*? Our Saviour certainly was applauded by the Conscience of every Hearer, when to those that travell'd, and were *heavy laden*, that were toil'd by contending with the Waves and Storms of Fortune, and oppress'd by those Difficulties which Covetousness and Ambition had engaged them in; when, I say, he prescrib'd these, this Cure of the Inquietude and Vexation of Life, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart,*

heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. Let us next consider *Meekness*; will not habitual Sweetness and Softness be more like to give Security and Tranquility to our Lives, and Rest to our Enjoyments, than Pride and Insolence, Haughtiness and Rage. Let us pass on to *Mercy* and *Charity*; how delightful are the Acts of it, how fresh and blooming the Reputation, how sweet and delicious the Fruit of it? But *Severity* and *Inhumanity*, *Cruelty* and *Revenge*, how unnatural the Acts, how infamous the Characters, how mischievous and deform'd the Effects of them. And if so, it cannot be difficult to resolve in whose Company or Retinue we may most probably find *Joy*, *Peace* and *Hope*. *Purity in Heart* is next to be considered. Now this is a Height from whence Heaven, and all the Joys and Glories of it, appear more lovely, and all the Riches and Satisfactions of the World little and contemptible. And why should I be afraid to affirm, That the Joys of this State are not only more pure and lasting, but more transporting than the Sensual or Voluptuary can ever reap from any Thing here below? Does not St. *Peter* tell us, that such rejoice as well with joy unspeakable, as full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. If there be any Virtues in Chri-

stianity that have any Air of Sadness and Severity, of Trouble and Uneasiness, they are those which now remain to be spoken to, *Mourning, Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness*, and *Martyrdom*; but these have their Charms and Beauties too, even in their Blacks, and are not less pregnant of *Joy, Peace and Hope*, than those which look more gay and chearful. The *Sorrow* of a Penitent Christian is a calm and gentle Shower, 'tis mingled with Peace and Hope, it softens and improves the Heart, and brings forth the blessed Fruits of Righteousness and Joy: But worldly Sorrow is a Storm and Tempest, and like that, wasting and destructive too. This is the Account St. Paul gives us of both, 2 Cor. vii. 10. *For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

As to *Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness*, if indeed we were to estimate this Virtue by the Signification which these and the like Metaphors are wont to have, when they are made use of to describe the Passions of the Sinner for his Objects, such as the Ravening of the Covetous, the Thirst of the Ambitious, the Flames of the Lustful, and such like, we could indeed form

no very taking Idea of it; but when such Metaphors are used to express the Christian's Love of Righteousness, or God, or Heaven, they must be understood as design'd only to express the Height of their Passion, not any Torment in it. Here only is Desire without Impatience, Ambition without Envy or Fear, Love without Despair or Jealousy, and *πλεονεξία*, or a coveting Abundance without Anxiety. For though the compleat Satisfaction of the hungry and thirsting Soul be reserv'd for the Day of the Resurrection and Triumph, yet it is every Day refreshed with the Antepasts of that eternal Feast; its Righteousness increases with its Hunger and Thirst; the Bounty of God is enlarg'd with its Desire, and it has a full Assurance that nothing can defeat its Success, or frustrate his Hope, but its own Negligence or Revolt from Virtue.

As to *Martyrdom*, this is a rare Case, and therefore not to be urg'd as a common Objection; however, this I have to say to it, let its Severity exceed that of a lingering Disease, let it outweigh the Sufferings of all those, who fall Martyrs to their Vices (though both these will admit of much debate) for I will not extenuate the Pain, lest I should diminish the Constancy and the
Glory

Glory of *Martyrdom* ; yet still there are two Things which blunt the Force of this Objection : The First is, that the Spirit of God, and of Glory, does never rest upon any so steddily and exuberantly, as upon those who suffer for Righteousness sake. The Second is, That they have a peculiar Crown and a peculiar Reward (not to affirm with *Tertullian*, that the Souls of such only pass immediately into Heaven) for this is the least our Saviour's Words import ; *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven*, Mat. v. 12. This is abundantly sufficient to shew you what Happiness springs from the Change wrought in our Nature ; and puts me in mind of the

2. Second sort of Change wrought in our State and Condition, and the Effects of it.

This Change may be reduced, as I have shewed before, under two Heads, *Remission of Sins, and an Inheritance of Glory* ; Blessings, for the purchasing and conferring which, the Merits and Sufferings of Jesus, the Power and Efficacy of the Holy Ghost, and the unspeakable Love of God, united and combin'd their Force and Virtue ; the Contrivance and Accomplishment of these, has employ'd infinite Wisdom, infinite Power,

er, infinite Goodness, from before the laying the Foundation of the World; and does, and will employ them, till that Time, when Time shall be no more; when the Son shall have resign'd up the Kingdom to his Father, that God may be *all in all*. But I will not embark my self in a vast Ocean of Matter. Where should I begin, or where should I end; if I should go about to enumerate the Felicities and Blessings, and consequently the Grounds and Reasons of *Joy, Peace and Hope*, contain'd in the Pardon of Sins, and a glorious Eternity? The Righteous and Regenerate seem not to need this; they know what the Terrors of the Lord, what the Joys of the Spirit, what the Pleasures of Faith and Hope mean. The Unregenerate, the Profligate, and the Sinner have need indeed of such Representations of Things as may be lively and moving: But oh! how difficult a Task is it, to imprint in such, in such whose very Faculties are deprav'd, who favour *not the things that be of God, but the things that be of man; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*: How difficult is it to imprint in these any Notion, any Sense of spiritual Pleasure and divine Happiness? Disgraces and Misfortunes must disgust these Men to the World, Disappointments

pointments or Sickneſs muſt break or deject them, Danger or Death muſt awe and fix them, e're they will be capable of liſtning to, underſtanding, or reſiſhing Diſcourſes of this Nature: And yet one would think, that it were not very difficult for any one, who had not utterly renounced his Reaſon and his Faith too, to infer that the Favour of an Almighty God, and a Title to a bleſſed Eternity; that a State wherein there is nothing we need fear, and nothing which we may not hope; cannot but poſſeſs the Soul of Man with ſolid and laſting Satisfaction; and ſuch is the State of a ſincere Chriſtian; *he ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord, Pſal. cxii.* And again, *He that fears the Lord, ſhall lack no manner of thing that is good, Pſal. xxxii. 10.*

But ſuch is the Stupidity, Inconſtancy, or Ingratitude of Man, that nothing makes us put a juſt Eſtimate upon Deliverances and Mercies, but the Senſe of Evils and Calamities, or a thoughtful Reflection upon them; and therefore nothing can give us a better Notion of the Felicity of a Chriſtian State, than the Miſery of Paganism. And this is done to our Hands by *St. Paul*, through the whole ſecond Chapter to the *Ephesians*; the Subſtance of which is plainly this: 1. That
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they were wholly given up to all sorts of Wickedness, and were consequently the *Children of Wrath*. 2. That this their State look'd desperate and incurable, they being then *without Christ, without Hope, without God in the World*. The direct contrary to this is the State of Christians; for God, who is *rich in mercy* for his great love *wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, bath quicken'd us together with Christ*; a Consequence of which is, *he bath rais'd us up together, and make us sit together with Christ in heavenly places*. Apply this to our selves, and then, had we been now Pagans, our Sacrifices had been Lust and Cruelty, our Gods Stocks and Stones, our Wisdom Folly; and our being Christians in Profession, and Pagans in Life, does not mend our State, but make it infinitely worse; the Obligations of God and our Knowledge, inflaming our Crimes and his Vengeance: But now if we be Christians in good earnest, all is the contrary; our Sacrifices are a pure, holy, rational Worship; the living God, who is the Object of our Worship, is the Support of our Hope, our Life is full of Peace, and our End will be crown'd with Glory.

But

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But will it not be objected here ; You set Religion too high, you over-rate the Pleasures of it, and talk of a Happiness which few or none ever experience. I am sorry for it, if it be so. I know indeed that Religion, in a modish popular Dress, is most pleasing and taking ; but 'tis not my Business to debase Religion, but raise Man ; to accommodate the Language and Sense of Scripture with too too great a Remisness in Religion, and as much, too great a Warmth in the Pursuits and Enjoyments of the World ; but to fire the Mind of Man, if it be possible for me, with holy Desires and Passions, by placing the Beauties and Pleasures of Religion in a true Light before them. But it may be again objected, will you not allow that our Assurance is very much weaken'd, and consequently our Pleasure very much abated, by just Reflections on the Deceitfulness of our Heart, and the Doubtfulness of our State ? The best Answer that can be returned to this Objection is, to advise Men to quit that dubious fluctuating Life, made up of the uncertain Revolutions, Ebbs and Flows of Vices and Virtues, good Works and bad ; and advance on to a steady and regular Religion ; and then your Doubts and Fears will vanish with your Vices, and your As-

Assurance grow up with your Perfection. If this satisfy not, I will lay before you in two Words all that is necessary to be determin'd in this Matter; If our Assurance relate to our Judgment of our present State, then have we a plain Rule or Test, *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. But if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight,* 1 John iii. 21, 22. If any Man dispute the plainness of this Rule, and doubt whether a wise, enlighten'd and sober Man, for such a Christian is, be a compleat Judge of his own Actions, I mean of the moral Goodness or Obliquity of them, whether he be conscious to himself what he loves or hates, desires or fears, grieves or rejoices at, I must conclude such a one not stupid and ignorant, but through some Prejudice or Lust, render'd unwilling to see the Truth. If

2. Our Assurance regard our Perseverance to the End in a good State; all I am to put you in mind of, is, that the Covenant of Grace, the Promises of God, oblige him not to abandon us, unless we abandon him, nor ever to leave us destitute (if it be not our own fault) of Grace sufficient to enable us to finish our
spiritual

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spiritual Warfare successfully. This is evident from that of *St. Paul*, 1 Cor. x. 13. *There hath no Temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.* If then the Faithfulness of God stand engaged; if his Providence and his Spirit be concern'd for our Security; we have reason, I think, to conclude that the *Joy, Peace, and Hope* of a Christian stands upon a good Foundation: A Foundation that nothing will undermine but our own Negligence, and Falshood to God and our selves; and to keep us even from this, his Grace is ready to contribute all that can consist with the Laws of divine Wisdom, with the Liberty of a rational Creature, with a voluntary and reasonable Worship, and with the Rewards and Punishments of the Gospel. All which will be plainer, when we consider,

II. The second Instrument or Mean by which God produces in his servants, *Joy, Peace, and Hope*; namely, his Holy Spirit. Three Offices there are, which are commonly attributed in Scripture to the Holy Ghost,

Ghost, *Sanctification*, *Obsequation* or *Consolation*, together with his Attestation of the Truths, or his Defence and Patronage of the Doctrines and Churches of Christ: Each of these have a strong Influence upon the *Joy*, *Peace*, and *Hope* of a Christian; but I can take but a very slight and transient Glance of them.

To enquire here concerning the Manner of the Spirit's Operation, is not much to my present Purpose; all that my Business obliges me to, being to put you in mind,
1. That the Spirit of God by that *Testimony* which he bore to the Gospel, has done enough to prevent our defeating the Efficacy of those glorious Truths by Infidelity; the *Miracles* he wrought, the *Wisdom* and the Courage with which he inspired the Followers of our Lord, were such Arguments of the Divinity of the Gospel, as neither the Traditions nor Glosses of the *Jews* could elude, the Philosophy of the *Gentiles* answer, nor the Force and Malice of Man or Devil combin'd together, confront or baffle.

And as his *Testimony* has left no Room for the Infidelity of Sinners; so 2d, The *Assistance* he is ever ready to afford good Men, if well consider'd, is enough to remove all Discouragements from the Weakness of our
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Nature, or Temptations of our State. God knows we are but Men, he knows to what Perfection the Force of Nature can of it self carry us, and therefore he expects nothing from us, but what is proportionable to the Succour he supplies us with. Hence we may observe, when our Lord and Master published our holy and exalted Religion on the Mount, he did anticipate all Objections which the Difficulties of it were likely to create, by the Promise of the Holy Ghost; *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give his holy Spirit to them that ask him,* Mat. vii. 7, 11. This is that Grace which awakens us when we slumber, quickens us when we tire, strengthens us when we faint or despond, exalts and vigorates us when we flagg and grovel. It is called *the Power of the Holy Ghost*, and the *Might of God*, in Scripture, to assure us of the Sufficiency of it, to accomplish the Ends for which it is bestowed. And indeed, insufficient Grace is such a Contradiction to the Riches of divine Goodness, to the Fellow-feeling and Compassion of our great High Priest; nay, such a Contradiction

diction to it self, that being a strange sort of Grace, that can only make us more guilty, or more miserable, not virtuous or happy, that I wonder how it ever entred into the Heads of Men.

If then God does administer Strength proportionable to the Duty, let him command what he please; let but his Spirit be present, and in all our Trials *we shall come off more than Conquerors*: We shall stand unbow'd under the Weight of Evils, or look down with Scorn on the Flatteries of the World, and Caresses of Sense; for the World will be crucified to us, God will be all in all to us, we shall rejoyce in the Lord Jesus *with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*.

Nor will you think this at all incredible, if you remember, 3. That our *Consolation* is one great Office of the Paraclet or Comforter: *This Spirit is to witness to our spirit, that we are the children of God*; 'tis to be an Earnest to us of our future Inheritance, to raise our Joys high, and give us some foretastes of the Powers of the World to come. God accommodating himself to the Nature of Man, who, as *Plutarch* well observes, is made to love as well as know, would not leave him destitute of Pleasure: This had been the State of those Devils in the Gospel,

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which wandered *through dry places, seeking rest and finding none.* No, no, Religion does not persuade us to renounce, but exchange our Pleasures; to quit our impure and corrupt, for pure and holy ones, our false for true ones, and our perishing withering Joy for growing and immortal ones. Ah Religion! our Hearts may say of thee, what *Tully's Wit* made him once say of *Virtue*, *One holy, one religious Day, is to be preferr'd before a sinful Immortality.* Ah my God! where have I lost my self, my Sense, my Reason, when in any Part of my Life, I *forsook thee, the fountain of living waters, and hew'd out to my self cisterns, broken cisterns that would hold no water.* Ah! how good and gracious art thou, and how inexcusable I, if I do not obey thee, since my Duty is Pleasure, and the Reward Glory. And my Virtues, though they take Root in the Earth, in Mortification and Discipline, yet they spring up, and blossom with *Joy, Peace and Hope*; and their Fruit are the inconceivable Delights and Extasies of Heaven.

SERMON



SERMON VI.

Charity in censuring Sinners.

JOHN VIII. 7.

And when they continued asking him, he lift up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

THough I have propos'd to my self to go through, in order, the System of our Religion; I mean, at least, all the necessary and fundamental Parts of it; and though well knowing that all Discourses are very imperfect, to say no worse of them, which are not continually intermix'd with practical Exhortations, or clos'd with useful Reflections, I have therefore all along had an Eye to this; yet I think it fit to intermix now and then a Discourse purely practical. Omitting therefore at present the further Prosecution of our Creed till the Afternoon, I will treat of these Words, mov'd to it by a Reason too sad and too well known

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to need to be mentioned. In the Text we may observe these three Things.

I. *The Sin of the unhappy Woman, presented before our Lord by the Scribes and Pharisees, Adultery, which by the Law of Moses was punish'd with stoning.*

II. *The Behaviour of the Scribes and Pharisees, they accused her to our Lord, and when he seem'd at first to neglect their Accusation, they were importunate for Sentence against her, They continued asking him.*

III. *The Behaviour of our Lord on this Occasion, consisting in two Things; an Answer to the Scribes and Pharisees, and Admonition to the wretched Sinner. His Answer to the Scribes and Pharisees is, Let him that is without Sin cast the first Stone. His Admonition to the Woman, Go, and sin no more.*

I will give you a brief Paraphrase or Decant on each of these Heads, and then from them all together infer two or three practical Observations or Directions.

I. *Of the Sin of which the Woman in my Text is accused.* So heinous and wicked was
this

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this Sin accounted in the Eye of the Law, that, as the Scribes and Pharisees tell our Lord, *Moses decreed Death, a painful Death for a just Punishment of it; for when they brought the Woman to him, they said, ver. 4, 5. Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned.* And if we demand, with the Pharisees, of Christ, speaking in his Gospel, *what sayest thou*, we have a plain Answer; for as the Law be- reaves them of this Life, the Gospel excludes them from another, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* No Man now, that reflects ever so little upon the Sentence of God against this Sin, either in the *Old Testament* or the *New*, can chuse but infer, that the Guilt of it must be very great and provoking; for would God, a merciful God, inflict upon a Sin temporal an eternal Death, were there not something in it extremely Wicked and Detestable. Man may fancy what he will, Wit and Mirth may

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frame what Apologies they please for Uncleanness; this is the Judgment of God, That *he that does these things is worthy of death*; and 'tis the Judgment of God only, that weighs any Thing, that has Truth and Authority in it: Though, if Men would judge soberly, if they would think according to the Nature of Things, they would soon conclude, there were evident and just Reason for this Severity against *Adultery*; for this is a Sin which includes in it, besides an extravagant Lust, the highest Injustice towards Man, join'd with an impious Contempt of God, visible in the Violation of the most solemn Vow and Covenant of Marriage; and what can be a provoking Crime if this be not? To break through all Restraints, to trample under Foot all Ties, all Laws divine and human, and to defy God and Man for the sake of a vile Lust. Nor let any one now fool and deceive himself, by fancying that there is some Ground indeed for this Severity against *Adultery*, but *Fornication* is of another Nature; for I must affirm, that the Gospel does as expressly condemn the one as the other; and though all the same Reasons cannot be urged for this, yet very just and great ones may. As for Example, a rambling Lust does utterly unhinge

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civil Society; it destroys the Sanctity of Families, subverts the Order and Regularity of Life, and robs the Off-spring of a Fornicator's Lust of that paternal Care and Affection which a Legitimate's Issue enjoys, and the Illegitimate has equal need of. Lastly, It breeds Anguish, Misery and Ruin, Dissoluteness and Impudence in Sin, and instead of cementing and uniting the Body of Mankind by the Tyes of Affinity and Consanguinity, it dissolves, divides, and disaffects all one to another. This, to add nothing more, tho' more might be added, is reason enough for the severest Censure upon Fornication. If we enquire after the Sense of the Gospel in this Matter, nothing can be plainer, for this excludes it from Heaven in the same manner it does *Adultery*; and that there may be no room left for any Shift or Evasion, it does frequently in the same Place prohibit, under Pain of Damnation, all the several Sorts of Uncleaness. Thus in the Place just now quoted, *neither Adulterer, nor Fornicator, &c.* Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: *Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, Gal. v. 19.* I need not multiply Texts, no Man
that

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that understands the Spirit of Christianity can imagine that it connives at Impurity of any sort. Can that Religion, which allows not of entering into Marriage to *satisfy mens carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding*; can that Religion, I say, ever be reconcil'd to lawless and extravagant Lust, which undermines all Virtue, and is inconsistent with the great Ends of Civil Society? This is enough to be said of the Crime with which this wretched Woman in my Text was charg'd by the Scribes and Pharisees, and that not upon Suspicion and Surmise, not upon Grounds of mere Probability, but taken in the very Act; *Master, this Woman was taken in Adultery, in the very Act,* v. 21.

II. I will now very briefly take notice of the *Behaviour of the Scribes and Pharisees*, this being in some degree necessary for the fuller understanding of our Lord's Conduct in this Affair. I will not here take occasion to enquire how far the Law of the *Jews*, which in this Case is to be look'd upon only as a national Civil Law, did oblige these Men to discover and prosecute this Fact; nor will I enquire how far a Zeal for God, and for the Honour of Religion, might have engag'd them

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them to it; or whether the Case of this Woman were capable of any comparative Alleviation and Diminution; whether this were the single Crime of her Life; whether she were betray'd and surpriz'd into it; or whether it were committed deliberately, or what is worse, were the Effect of an habitual Lust; no, I am concern'd no further here than to enquire upon what Principles the Scribes and Pharisees did what they did; and here the Scripture plainly expresses one, and seems to me to imply another. That which it expresses, was a desire they had to ensnare our Lord: *Moses, say they, commands that such a one should be ston'd, but what sayest thou?* Now if Christ too should command her to be ston'd, they foresaw that this would be a Contradiction to that meek and charitable Temper which all magnify'd in him, and to his constant Method of Preaching; for *he came to save, not to destroy; to call the world to repentance, and not to inflict death and judgment.* But if he should forbid her to be ston'd, then they thought they had found sufficient Matter of Accusation against him, as contradicting the Law of *Moses*, and usurping an Authority superior to him. The Principle which the Scripture implies, was that which we every where find the Scribes and Pharisees influenc'd by, namely,
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an hypocritical Zeal, and an ambitious Desire to set up and magnify themselves in the Eye of the World, as the Patrons and Assertors of Virtue, the Prosecutors and Enemies of Vice, and the Reformers of the Age. This I gather not only from their constant Character, but from their Behaviour here; for when our Saviour neglected them, *stooping down, and writing with his finger on the ground*, as tho' he minded them not, they would not be put off by this, but urg'd and press'd him, and became importunate for his Answer. This is the Method of Men who are acted by corrupt Principles, not a true Zeal or Charity; their Business, whatever they pretend to, is to advance themselves, not Virtue; to promote the Shame and Ruin, not the Reformation of the Sinner. I would by no means be thought to fix any Mark of Dishonour upon such amongst us as sincerely endeavour to put a Stop to the Growth of Impiety; but I would distinguish true Zeal from Pharisaism; and that we may easily do, for Pharisaism is always proud, bitter, and severe; but an unfeigned Christian Zeal is ever accompany'd with Humility, and its Reproofs and Prosecutions temper'd with Charity. But our Saviour well knew that the Spirit of the Scribes and Pharisees was remote enough from this,
and

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and therefore his Conduct towards them was such as we find; which is

III. The third thing I am now to consider, and I will do it briefly; in particular, both in respect to the Accusers and the Accused. 1. With respect to the Scribes and Pharisees: Our Saviour's Deportment consisted in two things. *First*, In Neglect. *Secondly*, In Reproof.

1. In Neglect: *But Jesus stooped down, and wrote with his finger on the ground, as tho' he heard them not.* This was as much as if he had expressly said, This is not your Business, nor mine neither; I am not sent to be a Judge in criminal Matters or civil Rights, but to preach *Repentance*, and *publish the glad Tidings of Salvation to Sinners*: And as to you, if you will be accusing, why have you not accus'd her before her proper Judge? But in truth, if you were not acted rather by Ambition and Hypocrisy, by Design and Interest, than Zeal, you would of your selves easily have discern'd, the Business of Zeal is rather to reform and reclaim, than to destroy and ruin; and if you had in you any room for Charity and Compassion, you would have made Trial of this e'er you had proceeded to the worst and last Extremities. I cannot but take this to be the Sense of our Master, for
two

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two Reasons: First, Because when he was appeal'd to in a Matter of Civil Right, he declines the Exercise of Civil Judicature, *Luke xii. 14. Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* By a Parity of Reason therefore I may conclude, that he did here too wave judging in a criminal Matter. Next this, our Saviour did not conceive these Scribes and Pharisees indispensably bound to have accus'd this Woman to the Magistrate, but at liberty to have exercis'd Compassion towards her; if they had, it is plain from hence that our Saviour did exercise Charity towards her himself, and that he did not put them in mind of their Obligation to prosecute her before the Magistrate, which is highly probable he would have done had he conceiv'd them under one.

2. The next Part of our Saviour's Conduct towards the Scribes and Pharisees consists in a sort of Reproof, by which he did at once free the wretched Woman from stoning, and awaken their Consciences, and put them in mind of this great Truth, that Reformation must begin at Home; and that the first Severity which our Zeal must exercise, must be upon our own selves, and against our own Sin: *He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone.* Which is as much as if he should have

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have said, Do you consider what you do, you that thus warmly prosecute this unhappy Woman? You who are thus importunate with me to pass a severe Sentence upon her, are you thus strict and impartial to your selves? Do you express the same Zeal and Indignation against your own Sins? Or is there any one of you that has no need of Pardon and Compassion your selves, and therefore will grant none to any other? Or if there be any such, let him stand forth and execute the Sentence of *Moses* on this Woman; *He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone at her.* This was a dazzling Truth, that flash'd like Lightning upon the Conscience; it was a sharp and searching Truth, that pierc'd into the Soul; and I do not doubt but that it was utter'd by our Lord with an Air of Power, and with such a piercing Assurance as they could not resist; for, as it follows, the Pharisees were stunn'd, and the Woman deliver'd, v. 9, 10. *And they which heard, being convicted by their own Conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lift up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine Accusers? Hath no man condemn'd thee? And she said, No man, Lord.*

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Lord. But will it not now be said, Was not this Procedure of our Lord, tho' just towards the Pharisees, a little too favourable towards the Offender? His Conduct did indeed detect the Hypocrisy, and repress the Insolence and Pride of her Accusers; but did he not at the same time seem too much to countenance and patronize Sin, discourage the Prosecution of it, and consequently very much defeat the Efficacy of the Laws? God forbid! How easy is it at the same time to have an Abhorrence for the Sin, and yet a Charity for the Sinner? To desire the Safety of the one, and at the same time the Extirpation of the other? Is not this the Temper of God himself? And this was the Temper of his beloved Son; nor can it be any Disparagement to the Sons of Men to write after these Examples. Mercy, as well as Justice, becomes Magistrates; Laws themselves should be interpreted with Equity, not Rigor; and the Prosecution of Offenders may be manag'd with Charity, as far as there is room for it. But I need say no more to this Objection, since our Saviour's Conduct towards the Woman, which is the

Next thing briefly to be reflected on, plainly justifies this Opinion of mine, and prevents all Aspersions on those who compassionate a Sinner; *Neither do I condemn thee, go thy way,*

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fin no more. Here have we Mercy mix'd with Reproof, and, as I said, Compassion to the Sinner, join'd with a plain Declaration of an Abhorrence against the Sin; *neither do I condemn thee.* Which is all one as if he should have said, Thou dost now escape, but let not the Goodness of God lead thee to Presumption, but Repentance; let not his Patience harden thee, but awaken thy Conscience and soften thy Heart; thou seest what thy Sin deserves, never entertain other Thoughts of the Deformity and Danger there is in it than thou hast now; never forget the Anguish and Distress of Soul thou wer't just now in; for tho' the Sinner may forget himself, tho' in the Jollity of his Heart, tho' under the Allurements of Temptation, the Flatteries of Prosperity, and the Confidence of Importunity, he may change his Opinion, yet Sin is the same thing, and God the same; Sin hateful, and God holy; Sin worthy of Vengeance, and God able to inflict it; do not therefore return again to thy Vomit, or to thy Mire; for tho' God has now spar'd thee, he will not always do so; every time the Sinner repeats his Sin, his Guilt increases, and the Wrath of God is more and more inflam'd. Do not think because I condemn thee not, therefore thou dost not deserve Condemnation; but

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remember, the greater the Mercy of God is towards thee, so much the more unpardonable wilt thou be if thou revolt and rebel again.

Thus far I have treated this Text by way of Paraphrase and Descant, and, as I hope, not unusefully. I will now by way of inference raise some doctrinal Observations from it.

1. *Wherever there is any room for Compassion and Charity towards Sinners, this is to be try'd; to proceeding immediately to Rigors and Severities, where there is properly place for Mercy, is a thing justly to be suspected of Pbarisaiism.*
2. *Private Persons ought to be very gentle and favourable in the Censures and Reflections they pass on those that fall.*
3. *No Man ought to disparage Religion for the Sin of him that professes it.*

1. *Charity is to be exercis'd towards Offenders before we proceed to Severities.* 'Tis a gross Mistake to think that Zeal and Charity are irreconcilable. The first Design of Magistracy and Laws should be to prevent Sin; the next to reduce and reclaim the Sinner; the last of all, to cut off those that are incorrigible; this is the Method of God, and this should

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should be the Method of Man, as far as he is capable of imitating it. *Psal. ci. 1. I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.* Of Mercy first, then Judgment; he that inverts this Order, and begins in Severities and Execution, seems not to be so much a Lover of Virtue, as an Enemy to Humanity; he seems rather to delight in Severity than Reformation, and makes his Power indeed a Terror, but scarcely a Blessing to those under it. And if this be the Method by which Laws should be form'd, and Magistrates, who bear not the Sword of God in vain, should govern themselves, how much more private Persons? *Psal. cxxi. 5. Let the righteous rather smite me friendly, and reprove me, but let not their precious balms break my head.* All will grant that this indeed is most consonant to the Spirit of the Gospel, to the Nature of Mankind, which is frail, and to the State of the World, wherein we walk upon Snakes, and are surrounded with Temptations; no one will doubt, on all these Accounts, but that mild and gentle Methods are first to be try'd before we proceed to Corrosives, Amputation and Excision. But the Difficulty is, In what Cases is there room for Charity? I answer, 'Tis first plain that there are such Cases, and that Offenders are not to be

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cut off promiscuously. *Jude 22. And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, baptizing even the garment spotted by the flesh.* And it is next plain that there are several things that either aggravate or mitigate an Offence; thus a Sin committed rather upon Error of Judgment than Corruption of Will, has thereby much of Diminution in it. And thus *St. Paul* tells us, that God had Mercy upon him when his Sin was Blasphemy and Persecution, because *he did it ignorantly, in unbelief.* Sometimes again a Man is overpower'd into an ill thing by something like Necessity, rather than allur'd into it by his Lust and Passion. Thus *Solomon* seems to look with an Eye rather of Pity than Severity upon a Thief who steals to satisfy his Soul when he is hungry, *Prov. vi. 30.* And *St. Paul* advises much Tenderneſs to be try'd towards a poor Christian who has been surpriz'd into a Sin, or overcome by a violent Temptation. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekneſs, conſidering thy ſelf; leſt thou alſo be tempted, Gal. vi. 1.* And it is not improbable but that there was something like this in the Caſe of the wretched Woman in my Text that recommended her to the Compassion of
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our Lord, for his Words seem to hint as much; *neither do I condemn thee, go thy way, sin no more.*

2. *That we ought to be very modest in our Censures and Reflections on Sinners.* How many and how strong are the Reasons which may be urg'd for this: When I hear with what Freedom and Severity one Christian lashes the Faults of another, I cannot but see that they take a secret Delight in exposing one another; that they gratify a malevolent Temper, and commit a greater Sin themselves while they accuse another; for how repugnant is this Carriage to the Humility and Charity that becomes a Christian? How fit is it next to consider, that we are rarely capable of forming a right Judgment upon the Actions of others; we censure upon Surmises and Reports, and as often load Men with false Crimes as condemn the true; and this being a palpable Injustice, we ought not rashly to bring ourselves within the Danger of committing it; how wise were it, were it but on this Account alone, to follow the Advice of our Lord, *Judge not*, Matth. vii. 1. But further yet: What Motive can any one have to aggravate and magnify the Sin of his Brother? Does it serve any good End to represent the World worse than it is? On the quite

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contrary, it disparages Religion, and emboldens Sinners; it tempts those that are ill-inclin'd to look upon Vice as unavoidable, and Virtue as a Pretence to call into question the Wisdom and Goodness of God, or utterly to deny his Creation and Providence, and to suspect that the Gospel is heartily believ'd by few or none at all; and what serves all this to, but to propagate Vice, and run down Virtue in the World? This is the glorious Effect of that Zeal which shews itself in talking endlessly, sometimes smartly, always severely and spitefully enough against the Mis-carriages of others. Shall I urge any more Arguments to prevent or cure this ill Humour? What can have more Weight in them than those two our Lord makes use of? The first in this Text, *Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at her.* And more fully, *Matth. vii. 3, 4, 5. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam that is in thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye? How comest thou to*
have

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have time to look abroad, who hast so much to do at home? Does it not import the more to correct thine own Sin than to revile another's? How comest thou to make such nice and critical Remarks upon the Slips and Frailties of thy Brother, whilst thou thy self sleepest secure under the Guilt of intolerable Crimes? *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam that is in thine own eye*; pretend not that thou dost this out of Zeal for God and Detestation for Sin; for wert thou influenc'd either by the one or the other thou wouldst begin the Reformation with thy self, for no Sin can be so justly hateful to a Penitent as his own; and in vain does he pretend to desire that God should be honour'd by all the World, who refuses to honour him himself. This was so home an Argument, that it routed the Confidence even of the Scribes and Pharisees, tho' they were a proud, presumptuous Generation of Men, equally apt to think themselves righteous, and to despise others; even these when they heard this, being convicted by their own Conscience, *went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

A second Argument which our Lord makes use of to repress a censorious Humour,

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and with which I will conclude this Inference, is that we have in the same Chapter, *ver. 1, 2. Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* I do not think that this Place is to be interpreted, as if God would ever pass an unjust Sentence upon us, as we often do upon our Brother; or that ever he will extend and aggravate our Sins, as we often do theirs, beyond the Truth of Circumstances, and Merits of the Facts; but only they who shew no Mercy, no Charity in their Censures, shall find none. And ah! is not this enough? Is there any of us so innocent, that we have no need of Mercy from God? Is there any of us so virtuous and holy, that we would be content to be judged according to the Nature and Merits of our Works? Some have ingeniously fancied, that when our Saviour stoop'd down, and writ with his Finger upon the Ground, he did in legible Characters set down the several Crimes and Villanies, especially the Acts of Uncleaness, which those eager Accusers had each of them been guilty of. I cannot assent to this, because the Text tells us, that the Design of our Saviour's writing with his Finger on the Dust,

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was to express a neglect of them, not to draw up Articles of Impeachment against them; and that they were convinced, not by what they saw, but what they heard: But 'tis certain, their own Consciences represented what the Finger of Christ did not; and the Reproaches of that were so keen and lively, that there needed nothing more to abate the Edge of that Severity. And truly, he must have but an odd Notion of Sin, whose Conscience, upon Examination, does not pronounce him a Sinner; and he must, I doubt, not be as penitent as he should, who does not look upon his own Sin as very great.

3. *No man ought to disparage Religion for the Sin of him that professes it.* There is nothing more unjust than this: Was there ever any Sect of Philosophy, or any Dispensation of Religion; was there ever any Discipline, or any Law, that could prevent Sin and Vice, and restrain human Nature within the Bounds of Wisdom and Virtue? We daily see that even secular Laws in forcing divine Ones, and the Terrors of the World join'd with those of the other, are not able to keep Sin under, so strong is the Propension of Man to it; so obstinate is the Corruption

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ruption of the World! How much less can Religion alone effect this? And yet, what is there in Religion weak or defective? No Man objects against the Precepts of it, unless this, that they be too strict, too pure: No Man will say the Rewards it proposes Virtue, or the Punishment it threatens Vice, are too little.

And thus I might go on, and shew from the Obligations God has laid upon the World, from the Efficacy of christian Sacraments, the Wisdom of its Discipline and its Counsels, and from its gracious Tenders of Pardon and Strength, that we have no Reason to charge Religion with our Sins. But what can Obligations signify to an ungrateful World? What can Rewards or Punishments signify to those that do not believe, who do not consider? What, finally, can the Assistance of the Spirit signify to those who do not seek it, or who resist and quench it? Alas! what Cure is there for wilful Lusts and Passions? What Remedy is there against Incogitancy, Obstinacy, and Presumption? What Motives can ever prevail upon Men, who do not reflect on them? Or what Truths can purify the Soul, if it do not believe them? Alas! alas! such is our State, and such our Nature, that it is
very

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very difficult to become good ; and when we stand, it requires great Care not to fall ; incessant Prayer, unwearied Diligence, holy Fear, wise Humility, and the most vigilant Caution and Circumspection ought ever to be the Companions of a Christian ; and without this, no Precepts, no Examples, no Exhortations, no Admonitions, no Threats, no Promises can ever secure us. The Gospel is certainly *the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God unto Salvation* ; but yet our Carelessness and Confidence, our Freedom and Indulgences may render it very ineffectual to us ; but this were the highest Injustice, to charge the Gospel with Sin and Folly of those who profess it, and to impute the Negligence of the one, to the Incompetency or Insufficiency of the other. 'Tis true, this has ever been the Method of *Atheists* and *Infidels*, of *Pagans*, *Hereticks* and *Schismatics*, and of ill Men in general. Thus *Nathan* told *David*, that his Fall had occasioned the *Enemies of God to blaspheme* ; and ill Men ever lie in wait for the Slips of the good and virtuous ; but I hope none amongst us will, upon any such Occasion, be Followers of Infidels and the Wicked, but of Christ, or the Prophet, and the Apostles. These bewail'd the Sins of others, with the truest

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trueſt Sorrow; they wept for thoſe who were themſelves harden'd, and offer'd Prayers for thoſe who, inſtead of putting up any for themſelves, were daily provoking Heaven by their Crimes. *Mine eyes run down with tears,* ſays *David*, *becauſe men keep not thy law.* *Oh that mine head,* ſays *Jeremiah*, *were waters, and mine eyes tears!* Jer. ix. 1. Thus have we our Saviour weeping over *Jeruſalem*, and *St. Paul* praying for his Countrymen, *Rom.* ix. with a Paſſion very transporting. This is the true Spirit of Chriſtianity; this is a Zeal becoming the Goſpel; in ſuch Boſoms we are ſure that the Love of God and their Neighbour, Humility and Mercy reign; but what Paſſions, what Humours reign in the Boſom of the cenſorious Pharifee, or any other that exerciſes either his Wit or Spite to the Diſadvantage of his unhappy Neighbour, or the Diſparagement of Religion, the laſt Day will diſcover.

S E R-



S E R M O N VII.

Directions how to run successfully.

I C O R. IX. 24.

Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receives the prize? So run that ye may obtain.

I Will not insist on the Metaphors in my Text and the Context, which several Commentators have given us an elaborate Account of, partly because I think I can spend the Time allotted me more usefully, and partly because you yourselves, without the help of an Expofitor, do easily understand that the Race the Apostle here speaks of is a spiritual one, and the Prize a heavenly and incorruptible Crown; one thing only is necessary to be observ'd, that as we must not argue from any circumstantial Part of a Parable, but from the main Design of it, so neither must we press a Simile or an Allegory too far. Thus here, we must not infer that there is but one Crown in Heaven, and that
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amongst those Numbers which contend earnestly for one, one only can obtain it, because it was thus in the *Isthmian* Race; nor on the other hand must we imagine that those who do not obtain the Prize in this spiritual Contention, suffer nothing worse than the Loss of that Reward and Glory which they strove for, because this was the worst that befel them that were foil'd in the *Grecian* Games, for at this rate we should advance a very wild and false Scheme of Divinity; no, our Business is to consider the Scope and Drift of the Apostle; and this is very obvious upon the slightest Reflection, namely, to exhort Christians to run vigorously that Race of Virtue and Glory which is set before them; and to this End he makes use of two Arguments, the first taken from the Reward or Prize which they will win, call'd in the Verse following, *an incorruptible Crown*; the other from the ill Success of many who pretend to run: *Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize?*

But before I enter upon this, two things are necessary to be done; to clear the Sense of the Text, and place the Exhortation in a true Light.

1. To shew you *who will not, and who will receive the Prize, &c.*

2. What

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2. What we must do that we may run successfully ; *so run that ye may obtain.*

1. *Who will, and who will not fall short of the Prize.* This we may learn from St. Paul, v. 26. *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly : so fight I, not as one that beateth the Air.* In these Words, as he proposes himself as an Example of such who *contend successfully*, so does he insinuate that there are two Sorts of Men who will certainly be disappointed in their Expectations.

1. Such as only beat the Air, and do not fight in earnest.

2. Such as run uncertainly, *i. e.* mis-employ their Zeal and mis-place their Labour.

Of the first Sort are those who purpose and propose great things, but never execute them ; who are always beginning, but never finishing the Work of Righteousness ; who make Profession of Christianity, but are never thoroughly influenc'd by the Power of it ; these are they whose vain Hopes our Saviour compares to a *House built on the Sand.* Matth. vi. 26, 27. *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand ;*

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sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. But our Saviour has more fully describ'd the various Sorts of these unfortunate Pretenders in that Parable, *Mark iv.* wherein he represents them by three Sorts of Ground; that on the High-way-side, that on the Rock, and that which was over-run with Briars and Thorns. When the Seed was sown on the High-way-side, *the Fowls of the Air came and eat it up*; these are they, who are either so obdurate nothing can penetrate or move them, or so gay and vain, of such volatile and unsettled Tempers, such Enemies to Thought and Seriousness, that nothing can fix upon them; the best Reason they hear is immediately defeated by a Flash of Wit, the wisest Thought defac'd by the next Fancy, and a good Motion or good Purpose utterly bannish'd by the next pleasing Trifle that presents itself. Others there are, who, like the Ground upon the Rock, shew well, but of no Depth; their Resolves are sudden, and so are their Relapses too; they are susceptible of good Impressions, but very unapt to retain them; they are soft, but not steddly; they are soon charm'd by divine Love, the Beauty of Holiness, and the Force and Attraction of Gospel

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pel Promises, but their Faith has not taken Root enough, nor are their Resolutions so well form'd but that they yield to the next Temptation. Lastly, There is Ground in which Seed grew up, but *Briars and Thorns* with it; *the Lust of the Flesh, the Cares of the World, the Pride of Life*, soon defile their Repentance, depreciate their good Works, and put a Stop to their Growth and Progress; so that their Virtue never arrives at Strength and Maturity. Nor is Vice the only thing that defeats the Purposes of a Convert, but too too often Negligence and Sloth, and a too early Confidence and Presumption. This was the Case of the *five foolish Virgins*, Matth. xxv. the Lamps of these were trimm'd and lighted at first, as well as those of the wise, but they soon went out, for *they had taken no Oil with them*. I will conclude this Head in few Words: Christianity must consist in Action, not in Talk; nor is it enough to begin well, but we must use all Diligence to cultivate and improve our Virtue; and if we would have it thrive, we must take care that it be not starv'd by our Negligence, nor choak'd by any Vice; if we would have it stand against Temptation, we must lay the Foundation deep, and make a thorough and entire Reformation, and not be too soon con-

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fident of our State, till we have made our *Calling and Election sure*, by a settled and establish'd Habit of Righteousness.

2. Another Sort of Christians who *run*, but do not *obtain the Prize*, are such who misplace their Pains and mis-employ their Zeal. The Christian Religion consists in solid and substantial Piety, not Fancy, Singularity, or Superstition. 'Tis good to be zealously affected in a good thing, Gal. iv. 8. This is what the Apostle means by those Words, *So run I, not as uncertainly*. And in those other to *Timothy*, 2 Ep. ii. 5. *And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crown'd except he strive lawfully*. 'Tis too common to pay tythe of Mint, Annise and Cummin, and omit Faith, and Judgment, and Mercy; to be very exact and scrupulous in Matters of little moment, and very forgetful, very negligent, or it may be insensible, of great and necessary ones. 'Tis too common to maintain a *Form of Godliness*, without the Power of it; to contend for the Injunctions and Traditions of Men, for some particular Fancies and Opinions of our own, while we pay too little Regard to the Doctrines and Precepts of God: But he that will run successfully, must keep within the Lines that mark out his Race; he must make the Word of God, and nothing else, the Rule of his

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his Judgment, Affections and Actions; his Zeal and Industry must be employ'd in those great Things for which St. Paul commends the *Thessalonians*; the *Works of Faith*, the *Labour of Love*, and the *Patience of Hope*. In a word, he must conform himself to the Will of God, and that not by Fits and by Halves, but constantly and uniformly; he must be *stedfast and unmoveable*, always abounding in the works of God, as one who knows that his labour will not be in vain in the Lord. And when he has done all, he must crown and perfect all by Humility, ascribing all entirely to the free and boundless Grace of God in Jesus; to this he owes his Virtue, and to this he must owe his Heaven. And thus I have dispatch'd the first thing propos'd to be enquir'd into, and shew'd you who will, and who will not receive the Prize. I am now to shew you,

2. What we are to do that we may *so run as to obtain*. The Apostle instructs us fully in this Point, *ver. 25. Now he that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things*. And more fully, *ver. 27. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a Cast-away*. In these two Verses he teaches us two very important Lessons.

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1. *That the most sure and compendious way to Victory is Temperance.*
2. *That a true Standard and Measure of Temperance is a Mastery over ourselves.*

He that carefully observes these Rules; will certainly *so run as to obtain the Prize*; for 'tis the Body that clogs and retards us in our Race; 'tis the Body that prevails with us to stifle our Convictions, and fool and baffle our Consciences; 'tis the Body that extinguishes in us all great and worthy Desires, overthrows our wisest Resolutions, and fastens us to the Pleasures and Interest of this transitory World in despite of all Reason and Revelation: If we were once rais'd above the Servitude of this, our Minds would be inflam'd with the Love of spiritual and divine Things; we should constantly and vigorously pursue the great Ends of our holy Calling, and we should feel an unspeakable Satisfaction in doing so, for the Experience of our Integrity would daily comfort us, and assure us of our *Regeneration*; the *Spirit of Adoption* would be shed abroad more and more in our Hearts, and God, even the God of Hope, would fill us with Joy and Peace in believing, and make us abound in Hope thro' the Power of the Holy Ghost. I beseech

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feech you therefore by the Mercies of God, I conjure you by the Hopes of an incorruptible Crown, that ye be temperate in all things, and that you propose to your selves no other Boundaries of your Temperance than what the Apostle does, not the Fashions of the World, not your Fortunes and Estates, not your Birth and Quality, not the Strength and Vigor of your Nature, but the Mastery, the Dominion over all your worldly and carnal Appetites; this is what the Apostle exhorts you to, *Rom. xii. That ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service; and be not conform'd to this World, but be ye transform'd, by the renewing of your Minds, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect Will of God.* Thus have I explain'd to you all that was necessary to the right understanding of the Text, without which the Exhortation of the Apostle would not have had its due Force upon you. I come now,

2. To the Exhortation itself, which consists, as I told you in the beginning, of two Arguments; the first taken from our Reward: if we run as we should we shall *obtain the Prize.* The second, the Danger we are in in doing otherwise: *Know ye not, that they*

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which run in a race, run all, but one receives
the Prize?

I. A Reward, *an incorruptible Crown, an Inheritance of Glory, an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us.* This is that Life and Immortality which ever since our Saviour brought it to Light through the Gospel, has taken up the Thoughts and employ'd the Care of the wisest and best of Men; this is what holy and devout Souls have in all Ages fought by Prayers and Tears, by Labour and Watching, by Self-denial and Mortification; this is what Martyrs and Confessors, those pure and elevated Souls, enlighten'd and led by a divine Spirit, have waded to thro' a Sea of Blood, thro' Reproach and Affliction, thro' Stripes and Imprisonment; this is what supported them amidst those Sufferings that human Nature shrinks to hear of; it fill'd them with Joy and Pleasure in the midst of Pain; it inspir'd them with Hope and Courage in the very Shadow of Death; it made them look down upon the Advantages, the Pleasure and Profit of this Life with a holy Disdain and Contempt, and rejoyc'd to think that they were counted worthy to suffer Evil for the Sake of Christ; thus they ran, thus they conquer'd; this was the Influence which the

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Joy and Crown set before them had upon them. Nor is this to be wonder'd at: What can raise us above the Body and above the World if a Heaven cannot? What can make us fit loose to transitory Things if the Assurance of eternal Things cannot? O blessed State! wherein my Understanding shall be advanc'd from this Childhood, as *St. Paul* speaks, 1 *Cor.* xi. into Manhood, wherein my Will shall be for ever mov'd by the brightest Flame of seraphick Love, and my Body be a spiritual and immortal one, bearing the Image of our Lord from Heaven. O blessed State! wherein I shall converse with Angels and angelical Men, that is, with Wisdom, Love and Beauty; wherein mine Eyes shall behold the King of Glory in dazzling and ravishing Perfections; wherein, in a word, I shall enjoy infinitely more than the Heart of Man can conceive; all that is desirable and good, all that is great and lovely, all that angelical Faculties are capable of, and shall enjoy it securely to all Eternity. While you reflect on these things, I am confident that no Way can seem rugged to you which leads to such an End; no Hardship, no Self-denial can seem unreasonable to you which will be thus rewarded. But there are several things which weaken

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the Force of this Motive, which I must briefly refute; such are,

1. Our Faith is weak, and we look upon this as a Matter we are not very certain of.

2. This Blessedness is in Reversion, not Possession.

3. It is too refin'd and spiritual.

1. We are not very thoroughly persuaded that there is such a State; it is very strange to remark, how those who are willing to take up with any appearance of an Argument against Virtue and Religion, are content with no Arguments, no Proofs, how solid soever for it; and they that are content to build their Hopes and Projects for this World on very uncertain Grounds, demand nothing less than Demonstration, and, if it were possible, of Sense with respect to another. Did I think I were to address myself to the Carnal and to the Worldly here, which I hope I am not, how natural were it for me to fall into this Expostulation: Do you, who trade in nothing but Uncertainties, object Uncertainty against the Life to come? How unreasonable is this Objection in your Mouths? uncertain Honour, uncertain Pleasures, uncertain Profit, uncertain Friendship, and all built upon a Life more uncertain than the rest, is the Traf-

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sick, the Business, the Design of such as you; to these things you sacrifice your Rest, your Peace, your Honour, your Virtue, your Health, your Reputation, your Bodies, and your Souls; and after all this Cost and Travel, it is uncertain whether you succeed in what you aim at, and infinitely more uncertain how long you shall possess it. You then that venture so much upon an uncertain World, will you venture nothing upon a Heaven, tho' there were something of Uncertainty in it? But, *O fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that the Prophets, the Son of God, and the Apostles have spoken!* Is it still uncertain whether there be a Reward for Virtue and a Punishment for Vice after all the Proofs that God has given us? Is it uncertain that there is a Heaven, when Christ came down from thence on purpose to assure us that there is one? Is it uncertain that Christ suffer'd for our Offences, and rose again for our Justification? then is it uncertain whether there be such Rites as Baptism and the Lord's-Supper; whether there be such a Custom among us as keeping the Lord's Day holy; nay, whether there be such a Religion as Christianity profess'd amongst us; for it is evident, almost even to Demonstration of Sense, that the latter are necessary Effects of the former, and
that

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that the one could not subsist without the other. Is it uncertain whether there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead? then is it also uncertain, as *St. Paul* argues, whether *Christ be risen*; and if so, then were the Apostles false Witnesses of God; and then were they not only the most miserable, but the most stupid of all Men; for then, as they did propose nothing to themselves in this World but Shame, and Sufferings, and Death, so they could propose to themselves nothing in another but the Punishments due from a just and holy God to vile Impostors. A profound and subtle Imposture doubtless this! And great Masters they were of Reason above other Sons of Men, who can discover it! For a Handful of poor ignorant Men to cheat the whole World, the Learned and Unlearned, the Subtle and the Simple, the Mighty and the Mean; to cheat them, I say, into Wisdom and Goodness, Virtue and Happiness, and this at the Expence of their Fortunes, Reputation and Blood in this Life, and Damnation in another.

To conclude: If *Christ* be not ascended up on high, then was not the Holy Ghost shed forth upon his Followers; and if it were not, then were the Apostles not only the most senseless, but the most impudent, flagitious Wretches that ever breath'd, and all that believ'd

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believ'd them were stupid, and infatuated to a degree that human Nature, as corrupt as it is, seems utterly incapable of; for no one can conclude less, if he read the Epistles of St. Paul, and the other Apostles, particularly the 12th and 14th Chapters of the 1st Epistle to the *Corinthians*; for in all these they make *miraculous Gifts* the Proof of our Saviour's Ascension and Glory, the distinguishing Character of Disciples and Children of God, the Pledge and Earnest of their future Glory; they discourse at large of the Variety, the Use, the End and Regulation of these Gifts, and this in Epistles directed to those very Men who were endu'd with such Gifts, to be read in all Churches, and to lie open to all the World, as well Infidels as Believers; for this miraculous Effusion of the Spirit was to be the great Instrument, as well of converting the Infidel as confirming the Faithful. Now had there been no such Spirit, had there been no such Gifts, I appeal to any Man whether it could have enter'd into the Heart of Man to write after this rate, things so monstrously impudent, absurd, and false too; this must have expos'd the Gospel and the Propagators of it to the last degree of Contempt, and instead of converting the Nations, have forc'd those who had already embrac'd it, to renounce

nounce and explode it. But I will pursue this Argument no longer, for I persuade myself you are ready to say there is no need I should; you all believe a Life to come, and a Heaven for righteous, humble Souls; I rejoice in it, and hope you demonstrate your Faith by your Works. But alas! there is,

2. Another Objection against a Heaven, which doth very much chill and damp the Influence of it in those that say they believe; and this is, that it is remote and distant; Temptations are present, the Things of this World court us with immediate Possession and Enjoyment; but the Reward of Self-denial, the Crown of Righteousness, is remov'd far from us by a long Tract of Time.

To this I answer, that supposing the Veracity of God and the Truth of Revelation being prov'd, this way of talking is very idle and extravagant; 'tis well known that Temptations do but deceive, not satisfy the Sinner; that even in this World we owe more to Hope than Possession, and live more upon Expectation than Fruition; and why should we not be content as well to rely upon God as on the false and flattering Promises of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil? But suppose the thing were otherwise, and that the Pleasures of Sin were all real, solid, and in possession,

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possession, yet how natural is it to remember what the Scripture minds us of, that *they are but for a Season*; what is present will soon be past, and what is to come will soon be present; and then the Things of this World, when once past, will return no more for ever; but the Things of the other, when once come, will never leave us, nor we them: *The World passeth away, and the Lusts thereof; but he that doth the Will of God abideth for ever*, 1 Joh. ii. Lastly, How contradictory is this Objection to our daily Practice? We complain that Life is short, and yet object against Heaven, that it is at too great a distance: Alas! we have not too much Time upon our Hands; by that time we can be prepar'd to meet our God, God will call us to himself; as soon as we can have dress'd and adorn'd the Soul, it will be time for us to put off the Body; there are few that are fit for Heaven, who think it too long e'er they go to it; nay rather, it is so little we do, and there is so much to be done, that we want Time to give God Proofs of our Faith and Love, and ourselves of our Integrity; and happy shall we be if Death and Judgment do not come too soon at last. The Scripture represents our Judge as standing at the Door; tells us, *that Christ is ready to judge both the quick and the dead; and that*
a little

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a little while, and he that shall come will come,
and will not tarry, Heb. x. 37.

3. The last thing that obstructs the Efficacy of the great Motive I am talking of, *an incorruptible Crown*, is this; *that the Pleasures of Heaven seem too spiritual and refin'd.* But to this it is easy to answer: All the Fault is, we are too gross and carnal; let our Minds be but once enlighten'd and purify'd, and we shall discover unspeakable Beauty and Perfection in the Scripture Descriptions of a Heaven; we cannot be so dull as not to see, that the more raised and perfect our Nature is, and the more excellent the Object, the more divine and ravishing will be our Pleasure; let us but take care to be renew'd and transform'd from Glory to Glory; let us be sure that we become Saints here, and equal to Angels hereafter; and then how far soever the Joys and Glories of Heaven be above us now, we then shall be fit for them, and they for us; in the mean time let us endeavour to refine our Taste, to improve and exalt our Minds, and then we may assure ourselves that the Satisfaction of an immortal and incorruptible and glorious Nature, will have as much more Life and Gust in it than what we meet with in any Enjoyment now, as such a Nature

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ture is above a crazy, carnal, sluggish, mortal one.

I should now pass on to the second Motive taken from this Consideration, *That so many run in vain, and fall short of the Prize.* I should lay before you the Matter of Fact, invite you to reflect on the dismal Consequence of it; I should enquire into the Reasons of it; and besides the Dangers which are common to us with Christians of all Ages, I should put you in mind of two or three peculiar to this; such are, Atheism and Deism, and a general Looseness in our Principles; a general Neglect and Contempt of the Scriptures, and the open Confidence of Sensuality and Vice; the Number and Obstinacy of our Divisions, and much Ignorance join'd with our Vanity on the account of superficial Knowledge; but my Time will not permit this: I will conclude therefore with beseeching you, that you would prepare your selves to *run with Patience the Race that is set before you*; that you would *lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that doth easily beset you*; that you would *not be slothful in the Work of God, but Followers of those who thro' Faith and Patience have inherited the Promises*; that you would with all your Might press on towards that Heaven which Christ hath purchas'd for you by his Blood,

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Blood, which the Spirit of God prepares you for, to which God incessantly calls and invites you ; where when we come, our pious Friends that are gone before us will welcome us with transporting Expressions of Love and Joy ; and we our selves shall one Day welcome those whom we leave here behind us,



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S E R M O N V I I I .

The Duty of Masters of Families.

J O S H U A XXIV. 15.

But as for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.

THere is nothing obscure or difficult in the Sense of these Words, nor can you possibly be ignorant of the Occasion of them. I will not therefore spend Time in needless Descants or Reflections on the one or the other ; my Business shall be to press and stir up all Masters of Families to imitate the excellent Example in my Text, and to prevail with every one of them to make the same Resolution which *Joshua* here does, *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.* I need not tell you how seasonable a Discourse on this Subject is this Day ; we complain of the Decay of Virtue and Goodness, and the Increase and Growth of Profaneness and Immorality, and we seem earnestly to long and groan for a Reformation ; I cannot think on

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any

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any Way by which it may be more wisely begun, or effectually carry'd on, than by awakening and reviving the Conscience of their Duty in the Masters of Families, and enkindling in their Breasts a Zeal for the Honour of God, and the Good of those Souls that are committed by him to their Trust.

To this End I will discourse from the Text of two things.

I. *The Duty of Masters of Families.*

II. *The best way of putting it in practice.*

As to the first, the Doctrine contain'd in these Words is plainly this: *That every Master of a Family ought to promote Religion in it as much as in him lies.* To move you to this, consider these three things.

1. 'Tis your Duty, and therefore without a conscientious Discharge of it I see not how you can secure your own Souls.

2. You have good reason to promise yourselves good Success in the Discharge of this Duty, and this is a great Encouragement.

3. Tho' this be at all times a standing Duty, yet we lie under peculiar Obligations to it this Day, as more seasonable and necessary than ever.

I. 'Tis

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I. 'Tis our Duty, whether we consider our selves as *Parents* and *Masters*, as good *Christians*, or as *Men*. I. As *Parents* and *Masters*. I need not tell you that Church and Kingdom were originally shut up within the narrow Bounds of single Families, and Prince and Priest inclos'd within the Bosom of the Father; nor are these Tyes dissolv'd by the cementing many Families into a greater Kingdom, still the Master of the Family is invest- ed with a Sovereignty over this little Body, with a Priesthood over his little Flock; and this Dominion is founded in Nature and Reason, and in all those Texts of Scripture where Children and Servants are enjoin'd Honour and Obedience towards their Parents and Masters. Does God now, think ye, confer this Power and Authority upon you to no End? Does he commit this Trust to you, without any purpose of calling you to an Account for it? Will God judge and punish Princes for neglecting the Interest of Religion in their Kingdoms, and will he pass over the Negligence of Masters of Families? Will God require the Blood of a Sinner at the Hands of a negligent Watchman, a careless Prophet or Priest, and will he not require the Soul of a Child or Servant at the Hands of a negligent Master or Parent? But what

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need I infer this Duty from Reasons and Arguments, is it not expressly enjoin'd both in the *Old Testament* and the *New*? Thus, *Eph. vi. 4.* Parents are commanded to breed up *their Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*; and Servants are here and every where else suppos'd and included in the same Precepts, as Members of the same Family; and what is more, not only subject to the same domestick Authority, but redeem'd by the same Blood, and Heirs of the same Hope. In the *Old Testament* this Duty is very frequently and very earnestly inculcated: *Deut. ii. 9.* *Only take heed to thy self, and keep thy Soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine Eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine Heart all the Days of thy Life; but teach them thy Sons, and thy Sons Sons.* Chap. xxxii. 26. *Set your Hearts unto all the Words which I testify among you this Day, which ye shall command your Children to observe to do all the Words of this Law.* Chap. vi. 6, 7. *And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine House, and when thou walkest by the Way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* Chap. xi. 19. enjoins the same thing in almost the same Words.

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Whence the Royal Psalmist observes, *Psal.* lxxviii. 5, 6. *For he establish'd a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our Fathers that they should make them known to their Children. That the Generation to come might know them, even the Children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their Children.* And as the Commands of God do expressly oblige us to this Duty, so do the Examples of all pious and excellent Persons too; as of *Abraham*, *Gen.* xviii. 17, 18, 19. of *Joshua* in my Text, of *David*, *Psal.* ci. and *Cornelius*, *Acts* x. What should I insist longer on this Argument, doth not Nature itself press us to it? Are we not carry'd on by all the Tenderesses of natural Instinct to seek the temporal Good of our Children and Families? And if so, then much more their eternal Good, as of vaster Importance than their temporal? And here I cannot but remark how absurd and preposterous a Notion the World has generally entertain'd of good Parents and good Governors of Families; they seem to think the whole Duty of such to consist in Acts of Fondness and Indulgence, in Order and Regularity, Sobriety, and good Husbandry, and a just Care, as they speak, of the main. But what? Must then the eternal Interest, which is certainly

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the greatest and dearest Concern of the Family, be the least, or none at all of the Head of it? Is he a kind or careful Master or Parent, who feeds and cloaths the Bodies, but starves the Souls of his Family? Who is solicitous indeed for their worst Part, but abandons utterly the Care of their better Part? Is he a kind Father, who takes indeed Care to make a worldly Provision and Settlement for his Children, but takes none at all to furnish them with those divine Principles and Virtues which should fortify them against Temptations, teach them how to enjoy Good and suffer Evil, and how to behave themselves in all the Circumstances of Life, and which should finally be the truest Foundation and strongest Fence even of their temporal Prosperity? I do not doubt but by this time I have sufficiently prov'd to you that are *Masters*, that consider'd in this Capacity, it is your Duty to endeavour to promote Religion in your Families. But here it is possible some may object: It seems then I am accountable for the Actions of my Family as well as for my own, and that I am not only bound to be godly, righteous, and sober my self, but to see that my Children and Servants be so too, and this as I tender my Salvation; if this be so, who will incumber himself, I will not say with

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with the Trouble and Expence of a Family, but this very great and dangerous Care you speak of? To this I answer: Every Trust which God commits to any Man, doth necessarily draw after it a Care and Duty; but then it is our Comfort too, that every peculiar Obligation has a peculiar Assistance, and if we acquit ourselves as we ought, will procure us a peculiar Reward.

Nor ought we to think the Doctrine I have advanc'd hard, for 'tis in few Words no more than this: that we are to do our Duty in the Station wherein God places us, and there is nothing happens to us in this which doth not in every Station; for every distinct and peculiar Station in this Life has its distinct and peculiar Hazards and Difficulties. I conclude then this first Motive in the Words of our Lord, which may without any Force be accommodated to this Purpose, *Matth. xxiv. 45,* to the end. *Who then is a faithful and wise Servant, whom his Lord hath made Ruler over his Household, to give them Meat in due Season. Blessed is the Servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him Ruler over all his Goods. But and if that evil Servant shall say in his Heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his Fellow-servants, and to eat*

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and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that Servant shall come in a Day that he looks not for, and in an Hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with Hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.

2. My second Motive to this Duty is taken from the second Capacity in which we may be consider'd, namely, as *good Christians*. Every good Man will do what Good he can, and the reason of this is plain, because he is possess'd with Zeal for the Honour of God, with Charity for his Neighbour, and because he finds *a secret Complacency and Joy in doing Good*; it is to these Principles the Scripture ascribes the Diligence of good Men in propagating Virtue and Religion in their Families. Thus says God of *Abraham*, Gen. xviii. 19. *I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, &c.* That is, I see the religious Bent of his Soul, and therefore am well assur'd that he will with the most tender and zealous Care labour to possess his Family with the Knowledge and Love of God. And thus in my Text, the Resolution *Joshua* takes up for himself and Family, does apparently proceed from a sincere Zeal for God. And in *David* and *Cornelius* (both which I shall have

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have occasion to mention afterwards) we find the same Zeal exerting itself in the same manner. *David*, Pſal. ci. resolves to purge his Family of all Impiety. *Cornelius* is ſaid to have *fear'd God with his whole Houſe*, he preſently communicates the Meſſage and Viſion of the Angel to his Family; and when he waited for *Peter*, and with him for the Words of Life and Salvation, he call'd together, not his Family only, but his Friends and Relations alſo. Thus Zeal and Charity, and the Love of Goodneſs, work'd in theſe, and other ſuch good Men; and if we be led by the ſame Spirit, it will operate in us in the ſame manner. A good Man will not be content to be good alone, but will endeavour that others may be ſo too, eſpecially thoſe who live under his Influence and Conduct.

But that this Argument may be the more deeply imprinted on your Minds, I will more particularly conſider the Tendency of theſe Principles, which I ſuppoſe every good Man in ſome degree or other to be acted by. 1. Zeal for God. Do you think that this Zeal for the divine Glory can conſiſt with a Con-
nivance at the Neglect or Contempt of God and Religion in our Families? or with a Cold-
neſs and Unconcernment for planting the Love and Fear of him in thoſe under our Charge?

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Charge? Good Men under the *Old Testament* were commanded not only to instruct their Families, but to talk of God, his Precepts and his Judgments, when they *sate in their House*, and when they *walk'd abroad*, when they *lay down*, and when they *rose up*. This is indeed a Deportment that does bespeak a Zeal for God's Honour; but what Tracks, what Footsteps of it are there in that Family where there is neither catechising nor reading God's Word? where there is no Discourse about him, nor any publick Worship of him? where, in a word, there are scarce sufficient Proofs of a Belief of a God and Providence? That Prince certainly will never be judg'd by God to have any Zeal for him, who testifies no Concern to maintain and uphold the Laws and Ordinances of God, to reform what is amiss, to repress and eradicate Wickedness, and to countenance and encourage Goodness and good Men; and can you think that God will be more partial to you the Rulers of Families than he will to the Rulers of Kingdoms? No, no; if you will approve your Zeal to God, you must imitate those great Examples which I have set before you; you must join with the Instruction of *Abraham* and Diligence of *Cornelius*, the Resolution of *Joshua*, and the Discipline of *David*: Psal. x.

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Mine Eyes shall be upon the Faithful of the Land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect Way, he shall serve me. Ver. 7. He that worketh Deceit shall not dwell within my House: he that telleth Lies shall not tarry in my Sight. I consider not whether David speaks here as a Prince or as the Master of a private Family, since this, as I have shewn in the beginning, alters not the Case.

2. A second Principle which reigns in good Men, is Charity; and Charity is here impregnated and animated by the Tenderneſſes of natural Affection. If then Charity obliges us to wiſh and ſeek the eternal Happineſs of all, how much more that of our Families? Want of Love and Affection to thoſe of our Houſe, and our neareſt Relations, is not only unchriſtian, but inhuman and unnatural; and if we love them can we endure to think of their eternal Miſery? We bewail their Death, and have we no Trouble, no Tears for their Damnation? Conſider the Zeal of *Moses* for the *Israelites*, *Exod. xxxii. 31, 32. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and ſaid, O! this People have ſinned a great Sin, and have made them Gods of Gold; yet now if thou wilt forgive their Sin, and if not, blot me out of thy Book which thou haſt written.* Conſider the Zeal of *St. Paul* for his People and his Country, *Rom. ix.*

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1, 2, 3. *I say the Truth in Christ, I lie not; my Conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have a great Heaviness, and continual Sorrow in my Heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my Brethren, my Kinsmen according to the Flesh.* What? Was the whole Nation of the *Jews* nearer to *Moses* and *St. Paul* than their own Families are to good Men? Did they wish the Deliverance of their People at any rate, tho' it cost them the sorest Afflictions; and can good Men neglect to procure the Salvation of their Families, by doing those things which (if they are good) they will delight to do, and which are their indispensable Duties? This sure cannot consist with any degree of natural Affection. *Noah* and *Lot* would hardly have thought their Deliverance complete if their Families and Relations had perish'd in the Flames or Waves, while they escap'd them; and methinks, one would be almost tempted to think that our own Redemption were not perfect, if those Limbs and Parts of us, our Wives and Children, have no Share in it.

3. A third Principle by which we suppose good Men influenc'd, is the Love of Goodness; and if this be in us, we shall certainly feel as much Pleasure in beholding the good Effects

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Effects which our Care, Example and Instruction will produce in our Family, as the Husbandman can in seeing those Trees thrive which himself has planted; or the Artist in beholding the Beauty and Elegance of those Works which his Hands have form'd. If this Principle be in us, we shall certainly delight to praise God in our Families as well as in our Closets; we shall delight to talk of all his wondrous Works; and we shall invite and exhort all our Children and Servants, as *David* doth all the Creatures of God: *Bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him forever.* And as a good Man cannot but reap a Pleasure from the Virtue and Piety of his Family, so the contrary cannot but give him a very sensible Affliction. How doth *St. Peter* represent *Lot* vex'd by the filthy Conversation of the Wicked? how much more deeply would it have wounded his Soul had these Impieties been committed within the Walls of his own House, by his own Children or Servants, which were committed by that ungodly People amongst whom he dwelt? In a word, how can that Man whose Soul is set upon Virtue and Goodness delight in those that are Enemies, or at least Strangers to it? The Carriage that displeases God must needs displease him; and those Actions that are inconsistent

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consistent with Religion, must appear much worse to him than those that are inconsistent with his Interest ; I need not therefore exhort such a Man to take Care of the spiritual Interest of his Family, he will certainly do it to gratify his own Pleasure and Satisfaction.

I have consider'd you now, First, as *Parents* and *Masters of Families* : Secondly, as *good Christians* : Let us now, Thirdly, in few Words see what is to be expected from you in this Point, consider'd as *Men of common Prudence*. And here I must affirm, that a meer Concern for our own temporal Good doth exact of us our best Endeavours for promoting Religion in our Families : *By Wisdom is a House built, and by Understanding it is establish'd*, Prov. xxiv. 3. Those Children and Servants that have a Sense of the Duty they owe God, will not violate that which they owe their Parents and Masters, if for no other, yet for this Reason alone, that God both enjoins and rewards the Love, Reverence and Service which they practise towards them ; and on the other hand, Experience teacheth us, that those Children and Servants who condemn God, will soon condemn Man ; that where there is no Religion there is much Confusion and Disorder ; that Estates soon moulder away, nay, that they are a Snare and
 Plague

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Plague to those for whom they were rak'd together, when the Vices of the Children and the Judgments of an offended God concur to dissipate them. I will dwell no longer on this Argument, I have abundantly prov'd the Duty to which I exhort you; and now, as a further Encouragement to it, I will shew you,

2. That your sincere Endeavours for promoting Religion in your Family cannot, in all human appearance, want good Success. What can hinder it? Do you think the Blessing of God, or the Assistance of his Grace, will be wanting to these Endeavours? Is it not his own Work that you are doing? Is it not by his Commission or Authority you act? Do you want Prudence? He has prescrib'd the Rules you are to walk by, and the Principles you are to inculcate; you may, if you be not negligent, see very far, not only into the Behaviour and Actions, but also the Temper and Inclinations of your Family; your Exhortations may be always seasonable, and your Commands always wise and pertinent. Do you want Power to enforce your Commands? What is become then of that natural Reverence which Children have for their Parents? What is become of that Honour and Authority with which God has invested you?

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you? What is become of that Esteem and Affection which your Virtues and good Offices must needs create in your Domesticks? What, does not the Interest of those of your Family depend, generally speaking, on your Favour? Is it not in you to admit into or exclude out of your Families? Is it not in your Power to encourage or discountenance, to reward and punish, to excommunicate, banish, disinherit; or the contrary, as appears to you most fit? I must therefore say, if you shall set your Hearts upon Religion, all that have Sense or Sobriety in your Family will do so too; if it shall appear to your Domesticks and Dependants that you value the Service of God not only equal with, but above your own, they will soon judge it their Interest too not to neglect it. Upon the whole then, it is plain to me that you may do more in your Families than Kings can in their Kingdoms, or Pastors in their Parishes; that no publick Laws, nor indeed any Discourses from the Pulpit, can be so well form'd, so closely adapted, and so powerfully enforc'd, as your Commands and Exhortations to your Families. Here therefore I cannot but make one plain Remark: We would all reform abroad, why do we not begin first to do so at home? 'Tis a preposterous sort of Zeal this of ours; what

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what we can do, that we neglect; what we cannot do, that we are ever attempting. Would we all be Princes and Priests? we may be both at home; this way (and I doubt very seldom any way else) we may be great and useful, serviceable and beneficial to Mankind; and why do we not set about it? How great, how happy a Work has God put in the Power of every Master of a Family to accomplish? to convert a Sinner, to save a Soul, to propagate Holiness, to nurse up such as shall be both an Honour and Support to our Religion and our Country: What a blessed Work is this! How glorious a Reward attends it! How shall they who perform it shine like Stars in the Kingdom of our heavenly Father! Let us then all set about it, and God will be with us; but let us set about it immediately. For,

Thirdly, Tho' the Inspection into and Care of the Morals of our Families be at all times a standing and indispensable Duty, yet never was it more necessary or more seasonable than now: Do numerous and great Mercies lay an Obligation upon a People to a more peculiar and eminent degree of Religion, as it is plain from the Context *Joshua* thinks they do? No Nation under Heaven, no, not *Israel* it self, ever receiv'd more or greater than we have

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done. Is the Care of Families the best way to maintain and propagate Religion amongst an ungrateful and backsliding People? Certainly none, no, not *Israel* itself, had ever more need to pursue this Method than we. Is the Safety and Prosperity of our Nation the thing we thirst after? Reformation is the only way to it, and this must begin by reviving in the Masters of Families the Conscience of this Duty; if we wait for others, for publick ways, I doubt we shall find our Expectations so long disappointed, that God will find himself oblig'd to take the Work into his own Hands; this then is the way to prevent the Judgments of God, and rescue both Church and State; namely, a careful and pious Education of our Children and Servants. We pretend to long after and groan for a Reformation, why do we not set our Hearts and our Hands to the Work? The Truth is, whilst we complain of the Growth of Irreligion and Profaneness, we are ourselves in a great measure the Causes of it; were our Houses the Schools of Virtue and Nurseries of Religion, the World could never be the Sink of Sin; for they that learn Virtue at home, will practise it abroad; they that begin in the Spirit, will very rarely make an end in the Flesh. It is *Solomon's* Observation, *Train up a Child in the way he should go,*

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and when he is old he will not depart from it,
Prov. xxii. 6. I come now,

II. To consider, *how this Duty may be successfully practis'd.* 1. *Joshua* has wisely taught us what the Order of our Resolution must be, *As for me and my House.* We must resolve to be good ourselves, or else it is to little purpose to go about to make our Families so; we must shine ourselves if we will give Light to others; we must burn and flame ourselves if we will enkindle in others a divine Zeal, a divine Love; we must be thoroughly sensible of the vast Importance of Religion ourselves if we desire to make others so; without this, our Exhortations and Addresses to our Domesticks will want Life and Power; our Commands and Reproofs will want Authority; and what is more than all, all Endeavours will want a Blessing; for what has he to do to take the Name of God within his Mouth who hates himself to be reform'd? What has he to do to take the Mote out of another's Eye who has a Beam in his own? I do not mean all this while, that even an evil Man is not oblig'd to look after the due Government of his Family; nor do I affirm that God will not in any degree bless his Performances; but only I say, that the Wicked and

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the Hypocrite have little ground to expect a Blessing on what they do.

2. They who will be successful in this Duty, must often reflect on the Defects and Improvements of their Family, consider what is right, and what is amiss in it; they must contrive, and study, and consult about the Ways of redressing what is amiss, and advancing what is good; and above all, they must constantly in their Retirements beg of God Wisdom and Zeal to fit them for this Work, together with his Blessing upon it; and they must patiently wait for the Return of their Prayers and the Fruit of their Labours; and tho' things should not answer their Expectations, they must not be discourag'd, nor quit their Attempt, as desperate, but must continue stedfast and unmoveable in the Prosecution of their Duty; and that they may do so, they must often reinforce their Patience, awaken their Zeal, and renew their Charity, by proper Considerations; *viz.* they must often think that God has waited long for them; that human Nature is corrupt; that we know not the Times and Seasons of divine Grace; that it is worth all the Patience and Labour of our whole Life to save a Soul; and finally, that whatever Effect our Travels have on others, they will procure a great Reward to

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our selves; but God will not have regard to the Success, but the Sincerity and Zeal of our Endeavours.

3. They must by catechising and by reading the Word of God in their Families possess each Soul with the great Principles of the Gospel, and the Grounds and Evidences on which they stand; and by constant, devout, and well-weigh'd Prayers, they must beget in them an Awe for the divine Majesty, and a just Sense of their Wants and Dangers, and the wise Fears and Hopes that become a Christian. These are the general Rules by which you are to steer your Course; nor can I now enter upon any more particular Directions for your Conduct in this Duty.

Two things only I will just mention: 1. That you will oblige every Member of your Family, that is capable of it, to frequent the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper. I might justify this Advice by many Reasons, but I will at present propose only this one: I find under the *Old Testament* God was ever wont, either in order to the Maintenance and Preservation, or to the restoring Religion, to make use of this Method first, to put his People in mind of the very great and wonderful things he had done for them; and next, to call them to the renewing of their Covenant. Now under the

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New Testament, the Institution of this Sacrament answers both these Ends: For first, it calls us to a frequent Repetition of our Covenant; it obliges us to prepare our selves to meet our God in Holiness, and frequently and solemnly to devote and dedicate our selves to him; next, it invites us to celebrate the Goodness of God in the Redemption of the World by Christ Jesus, that so our frequent and serious Reflection on the Sufferings and Death of Christ, and the great Reason and End of them, our Salvation, might not only shame us out of our Ingratitude, Fickleness and Inconstancy, but also inflame our Hearts with a Love of our Master, and a Zeal for his Honour. Whoever reflects on this Influence of this Sacrament, cannot but discern an evident Reason for frequent and timely Communion.

2. The next thing I would advise is, that you accustom your selves and your Family to the Practice of Charity; that as God prospers you, you should constantly lay aside something for the Poor, and industriously cherish in your Domesticks Bowels of Tenderness and Compassion; teaching them both by your Words and Examples, that on these two Duties, the Love of God and our Neighbour, hang all the Law and the Prophets; that he who loves not his Neighbour, doth in vain pretend

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pretend to love God; that no Man shall be a Loser by the most liberal Practice of a prudent and christian Charity, but that hereby, at the same time he lays up a good Foundation for the World to come, he shall procure a Blessing upon himself and Family.

I need not make any Application of this Discourse, I have been all along exhorting you to a practical and important Duty. As you be *Parents*, Nature and Religion too oblige you to pursue the eternal Welfare of your Children and Families; as you are *Christians*, your Zeal for God, your Charity for your Neighbour, and your Love of Goodness, oblige you to carry on the same Design; your private, your temporal Interest, which is best secur'd by the Religion of your Families, presses you to the same Duty; and the Provocations and Danger of our Nation demand it now more earnestly than ever; let us then hearken to all these Calls: What can prevail with us, if neither publick nor private Interest, neither Nature nor Religion, neither the Love of our Children and Servants Souls, nor of our own? But then, that we may prove successful in this Work, let us begin it with the Reformation of ourselves; let us carry it on by much Application of Mind and many Prayers; and let us compleat and finish it by

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Sacraments and Charity, by repeated Acts of Praise and Gratitude to God, and of Goodness and Compassion to Man; this will certainly make us serviceable in our Station, dear to God now, and happy and glorious in Eternity.



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S E R M O N IX.

The Example of Christ the Christian's
Rule and Encouragement.

H E B. XII. 2.

*Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of
our Faith, who for the Joy that was set be-
fore him, endur'd the Cross, despising the
Shame, and is set down at the Right-hand of
the Throne of God.*

THE Design of the Text, as by St. Paul
address'd to the *Hebrew* Christians,
was to persuade them to renounce all Sins,
and especially those to which either their na-
tural Constitution did most incite them, or
their private Calling and Profession most ex-
pose them, or their Relations they stood in to
the World most tempt and sollicit them; nor
this only, but also that they should persevere
in all the Duties of Religion with an unwea-
ried Patience, and be ready to encounter with
a resolv'd Courage and a sincere Faith what-
ever

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ever Afflictions might befall them for the sake of it. And because the Apostle did well understand that this was a Work of great Difficulty, and consequently that they would stand in need of mighty Motives and powerful Supports and Encouragements, therefore he advises them to consider the Example of our blessed Lord and Master, *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*; for in this they would behold his Faith contending with all the Difficulties, nay, more and sharper than any they could possibly meet with, and yet vanquishing and triumphing over all; in this they might also discern what that Faith was by which he conquer'd, namely, the Belief and Expectation of that Happiness which was to reward his Sufferings; in this, finally, they might discern how far the Joy which is set before the Christian, doth out-weigh the Trouble and Hardship which he undergoes, and how far the Glory which he shall enter into doth out-weigh all the Shame and Reproach which he can suffer here; the Apostle therefore earnestly exhorts them to *look unto Jesus*, that is, seriously and frequently to ponder and revolve in their Minds the Sufferings and Glory of Christ, reasonably judging that nothing would more effectually persuade Men
to

to subdue their Lusts, and more firmly fortify them against whatever Ills they were to suffer for the Sake of the Gospel; *looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Joy, &c.*

Having thus given you an Account of the Design of these Words, I will, in order to the promoting the same Design amongst you, discourse of these two things.

I. *That there are many and great Difficulties which we must all encounter and surmount in our Christian Warfare.* This is here suppos'd and insinuated in the first Verse, and set forth at large in the whole foregoing Chapter.

II. *That the serious and frequent Consideration of the Sufferings and Glory of our blessed Saviour will prove an effectual Incitement and Encouragement to us in this our Conflict.*

1. *That there are many and great Difficulties, &c. To resist unto Blood, to seal our Faith by our Deaths, and to purchase an eternal by the Loss of a temporal Life, is a Task impos'd by divine Providence on but very few; this is left for the great Heroes of Christianity, and the most*

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most rais'd and heavenly Minds; and for this reason, as also because I hope we shall never fall under any such fiery Trials of our Faith, I shall pass over this. But to *renounce the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, to despise the Reproach and Shame* which a Life truly christian may expose us to among a great Part of those we converse with; to subdue all our corrupt and disorderly Habits, and to stifle and suppress our vicious Inclinations, this is every Christian's Duty, and contains great Difficulty in it. What can be more evident than this? Our Lord and Master calls this *the cutting off the right hand, and the pulling out the right Eye*, Matth. v. 30. The Apostle expresses it by *mortifying the Deeds of the Flesh*, Rom. viii. 13. by being *planted together in the Likeness of his Death*, Rom. vi. 5. by being *crucify'd with him*, Gal. ii. 20. and such like; all which does sufficiently imply the Repugnancy and Contradiction there is between the pure and heavenly Precepts of the Gospel and our sensual Lusts and worldly Affections; and teaches us, that the mastering these our Lusts and Passions commits a Violence upon Flesh and Blood, which bears some Resemblance to the Suffering and Death of our dear Lord. But I need not prove to you how difficult a Work it is for an ambitious and vain-glorious Man

to suffer a contemptible Fortune, and an obscure, inglorious Name; for a covetous Man to part with his dear Wealth, and all the Passion he had for it: I need not tell you how hard a Task it is for a gay and vain Person to renounce the gaudy Vanities of Life, and the frothy, empty Pleasures of Courtship, Laughter, Noise and Nonsense; for the Voluptuous and Intemperate to stifle his wanton Flame, and forego the luscious Draughts of sinful Pleasures: I need not, finally, tell you how great a Work it is for the natural Man to despise a World so agreeable to him, and set his Affections upon another he has neither seen nor known; another, whose Pleasures bear no resemblance to this here, and its Joys are too refin'd and elevated for him to relish; I need not, I say, prove all this to you, your own Experience attests the Truth of the Assertion; I appeal to your warm and passionate Prosecution of these things, even to the Neglect of Religion, the Contempt of God, the Torture of your Consciences, and the Hazard, if not the final Ruin, of your Souls: I appeal to your sharp and numerous Contentions about them, even to the Violation of Charity, the Reproach of the Gospel, and the Disturbance of your own and others Peace: I appeal to your too notorious Shifts and Pretences, devised

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vifed merely to varnish and fet off your Lufts, and delude and fool your Confciencces; for ah! how often do you meditate and ftudy an Excufe, in dcspite of the Reproaches and Accufations of your own Confciencces, to protect a Sin which you cannot endure to part with? Ah! how often has the very Word of God been violently wrcfted and profanely perverted to countenance thofe Lufts which you would not fuffer it to condemn? I appeal, laftly, to the Unfucccfsfulnefs of thofe Attempts which you have often made againft your Sins; for this happens, not becaufe fincere Endeavours cannot conquer, for that is repugnant to the direct Affertion of the Gofpel and the Promifes of God; but becaufe the Temptations of the World and Flefh appear to you fo taking and agreeable, that you cannot rcfolvc to defy them in good earneft; and becaufe your Lufts are fo dear to you, you cannot find in your Hearts to proclaim an unfeigned War againft them.

If I thought this were not enough to convince you that we cannot vanquifh our Lufts without a very difficult Conflict, and very fincere and vigilant Endeavours, I would lead you into the Chamber of the Sick, the dying Sinner, from whose own Mouth you fhould learn how clofely his Sin has ftuck to him;
how

how many Contests his Reason and his Lusts maintain; how often he was divided between the Convictions of his Conscience and the Enticements of Temptations, and yet still his Lusts prevail'd, and hunted him into this fatal Toil, pursuing him even to the Bed of Sickness and Death. Here you shall have a Man condemn the Folly of his Covetousness, by which he confesses that he never truly repented of it till now, when he is ready to be stript of all; and that he could never before get rid of that vexatious Thirst of Wealth, tho' the World reproach'd it, and the Man of God condemn'd it, and threaten'd it with Judgments. Here you shall have another bemoan his wanton Lusts, which in his Health he would not be prevail'd with to extinguish, tho', as he now confesses, his Reputation and his Estate, his Health, his Conscience and his God call'd loud for Reformation. Here you shall hear another with pale and guilty Fears detest his Pride and Sloth, his Luxury and Riot, his Neglect of God and his Soul, which yet he would live in all his Days, tho' his Conscience had often foretold him what would be the dismal Issue of these insolent, these soft and pleasing Vices. A Man would think that the Wounds of Lusts were like those of poison'd Darts, where the Venom is

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So suddenly and universally diffus'd, that they admit no Cure. One would think that these *ἐνταρυστοι ἀμαρτίαι*, our darling Vices, did stick as close to Sinners as *Hercules* his envenom'd Shirt, and could not be torn away but with our Flesh, nor be put off but with our Bodies in the Grave. And yet alas! worse than all this, you shall hear Men complain: Such a Sickness once before I made my Peace with God, I wept bitterly for and renounc'd my Sins; and oh, that I had dy'd then! But since I have liv'd to perish again by the same Smiles, by the same Charms, the same Arts of my deceitful Lusts! Another, Oh! this Sin, which follows me to the Grave, and will haunt me even to the Presence of God! How often have I resolv'd against it! How often have I repented of it, and sometimes abstain'd from it a Week, a Month, but still it return'd, the Affection was not thoroughly mortify'd; and now I die of this inveterate Folly! Yea, and worse than all this, weak infatuated Men that we are! you shall hear some when they reflect upon their Lives, say with Sorrow, Such a time, or when I was in such a State or Condition of Life, I liv'd something carefully, I fear'd God, and kept pretty strict Communion with him, and tasted the Pleasures of the World to come, and had a secret Pleasure
in

in my own Conscience; and oh, that I had dy'd then! For since, my way of Life being alter'd, my Circumstances in the World better'd, the World grew more pleasing, and I more fond of it, I have been supine and careless, remiss, and forgetful of my God. So natural, so agreeable to Flesh and Blood, you see is the Pleasure of Sin, that scarce any Arguments are keen enough to divide us from it, any Resolutions strong enough to preserve us, any State secure and safe enough to defend us against it.

I have insisted thus long on the Difficulties to be encounter'd and surmounted in our Christian Warfare, 1. that I might convince you of the Necessity of greater Industry, Strictness and Watchfulness than is to be found among the generality of Christians. I am afraid that they who think it so easy a Matter to be a good Christian, do not so much labour to transform themselves into Christ, as to transform Christianity into a Piece of innocent Sensuality; I am very much afraid that their Notion of Holiness has too much Latitude, too much Indulgence and Compliance in it; I am afraid they are not very curious Observers, or else they are too favourable and indulgent Judges of their Affections, Lives and Actions; for when I read our Sa-

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viour exhorting us to a vigorous and earnest Contention, *because the Way is narrow and the Gate strait which leads unto Life*, Matth. vii. 13. the least that I can infer is, that our natural Passions and Inclinations tend to Sin and Death, and that it will cost us much Pain and Struggling to conquer them, especially if they have been pamper'd and confirm'd by Indulgence and Continuance in Sin. It is true indeed they who have been brought up under the Discipline of a sober and regular Education have so much the less to reform, and consequently the less Work to do; 'tis true again, that when Men have broke off the Dominion of Sin all the Duties of Religion are more easy and delightful; but when I read of our Saviour's continuing whole Nights in Prayer; when I read how earnestly he doth press his Disciples to Vigilance and Caution, Matth. xxvi. 21. *Watch and pray, lest ye enter into Temptation*. Mark xiii. 37. *What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch*. When I consider that we walk in the midst of Snares, that we are surrounded by Temptations of all sorts; that *the Devil, like a roaring Lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. When I consider that our Inclinations to the World and the Pleasures of the Body are so natural to us, that tho' they may be subdu'd, sup-

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press'd, or kept under, yet they cannot be utterly extinguish'd or extirpated; and that these are the Roots, the bitter Roots, from whence Sin grows; and when, lastly, I consider that upon all these Accounts the Apostles of our Lord have most earnestly exhort-ed us to be *sober and vigilant*, 1 Pet. vi. 5. to *watch unto Prayer*, 1 Pet. iv. 7. to *pray always*, 1 Theff. v. 17. to *pass the time of our so-journing here in Fear*, 1 Pet. i. 17. to *take to us the whole Armour of Faith*; to *take heed lest we fall*; to *gird up the Loins of our Mind*, and such like; and they themselves becoming il-lustrious Examples of this spiritual Industry, Sobriety and Watchfulness, witness *St. Paul*, *I keep under my Body, and bring it into Sub-jection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I my self should be a Cast-away*, 1 Cor. ix. 27. when, I say, I consider this, I cannot but think that the best of Men ought to practise great Strictness and Absti-nence; that they ought to endure Hardship, as good Soldiers of Christ Jesus; that they ought to be constant and diligent in all those Duties which are appointed as the Means of Grace; that after they have done all they may be able to stand.

Indeed I do not question but that Men of common Prudence, and accusom'd to a de-

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cent and regular Conversation, may without any mighty Difficulty preserve themselves from criminal Exorbitances and scandalous Excesses; but to preserve in our Souls Devotion towards God, to preserve a Relish of spiritual Things, and some sort of Anticipation of Heaven; to maintain such a Frame of Spirit as is exalted by Purity, Self-resignation, and the Love of Jesus into Heaven; to maintain in us a fervent Charity, and a truly christian, that is, a victorious Faith; in a word, to be constantly breathing forth such heavenly and inflam'd Affections as may bespeak the Residence of God's Spirit in us, and to lead that Life of Faith that becomes the *Children of the Day, and of the Light*; that will *adorn the Gospel of Christ, and shew forth the Praises of him who has called us out of Darknes into his marvellous Light: Hic labor, hoc opus est*; this is the Difficulty.

'Tis true again, if the Religion of our crucify'd Master can consist with all those sensual Indulgences, with all those carnal Liberties, and Wantonness, and Incontinence, in which the World doth generally allow itself; if it sets no other Bounds to our Pride and Ostentation than our Wealth and the Fashion doth; if it prescribe us no other Modesty and Purity than what the Breeding of the Age doth;

doth; if it indulge us as great a Liberty in Revelling and Drinking as is now generally thought consistent with Sobriety; if it permit us that Intemperance and Looseness of the Tongue which almost all are guilty of; in a word, if it require no more Charity than the Surplusage of our Success and Prodigality enables Men this Day to practise; if it requires no stricter Mortification nor more raised Devotion than the Man of Mode or Business, the Man of Breeding or Pleasure doth now practise, I would readily confess that all Discourses of this kind would deserve no better a Name than enthusiastical Harangues; and we might say of every true and strict Disciple of the Lord as the *Jews* did of our Saviour, *he is beside himself*. But alas! I am afraid we take very false Measures of Christianity; I am afraid the Way we are in is too wide to lead to Life; I cannot by any means approve of the Whimsies of Quakerism, or the Sowreness of a Sectary, or the Enthusiasm of a Monk; but yet I cannot be so gross and absurd neither, as to think that all the genteel Freedoms, and the fashionable Excesses, the modish Pride and Gallantry of this Age, can consist with the Strictness, the Purity and Mortification of the Christian Religion; I can never believe that the Garb and Behaviour,

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which is light and loose, even in a Play-house, can be modest enough for a Temple; I can never believe that the Expensiveness of our State and Riot, by disabling us to give, shall excuse us from Works of Charity; or that our Covetousness and Ambition, by engrossing all our Time and Thoughts, shall excuse our want of Devotion; I can never believe that Society or Friendship should be nothing else but a Commerce of Sensuality, and Conversation nothing else but an infectious Communication of Vanity and Folly; in a word, I can never believe that the spending a few waste Hours of Life in customary and formal Attendance upon Religion can be all that is meant *by seeking first the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteousness thereof; by continuing stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the Works of the Lord;* and such other Precepts; or that a Life of inoffensive Pleasure and harmless Vanity, and genteel Idleness, is all that is meant by Self-denial, Mortification and the Crucifixion of the Flesh; and having other Thoughts and Notions of Christianity than I see the generality of the World has, this was the first Reason why I discours'd so long of the Difficulty of being a Disciple indeed, that you may be convinc'd of the Necessity

ceffity of Strictness, Mortification, Sobriety, Industry, and Watchfulness.

2. My second Design was, by representing to you the Difficulties you are to encounter, and the Hardships you are to undergo, to engage you often to reflect upon the Example of our Lord and Master, seriously to survey his Sufferings and his Glory, his Life, his Death, his Resurrection and Ascension; that while you learn in the one what you are to imitate and what you are to encounter, you may derive from the other Support and Encouragement for both; for if we cannot enter into Life without great Struggling and Contention, all that can be rationally inferr'd from hence is, that we should often have recourse to those Considerations and Motives which may quicken, inspirit, and fortify us in this our Conflict. I come therefore to the

Second General, *That the serious and frequent Consideration of the Sufferings and Glory of our blessed Saviour, will prove an effectual Incitement and Encouragement to us in this our Conflict.* In the Consideration of the Sufferings, Victory and Crown of our Lord, which we are here by the Apostle call'd to, it is taken for granted, that if we share with Christ in the one, we shall also share with him in

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the other; if we imitate his Holiness, we shall partake of his Reward, *Rom. vi. 5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the likeness of his Resurrection.* 2 *Tim. ii. 11, 12. If we die with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.* This then being supposed, the Example of our Lord contains in it two great Motives to Holiness; for first, it gives us a clear Proof of the Greatness and Certainty of its Rewards; and secondly, of the Possibility and Practicableness of the Duty.

First therefore of the Reward of Holiness, and the Certainty of it, from the Consideration of Christ. If we consider Christ in his Life and Death here upon Earth, which is the dark and cloudy side of the Pillar, behold a Man obscure and inglorious, mean and contemptible in his Fortune, traduc'd and scandaliz'd in his Name, as an Enthusiast and Madman; poor and laborious in his Life, as remote from the Softness and Luxury, as from the Honour and Wealth of the Great; travelling and preaching the Gospel by Day, watching and praying by Night; conversing only with the Sick, Diseased, and Ignorant; and accompany'd by a few despicable People of the same Rank and Fortune with himself;
and

and after all cut off in the Flower of his Age, and that by no common Misery, but the most reproachful and the most painful Death, dying as the basest of Men, and the greatest of Malefactors, as an Impostor and a Rebel, breathing out his innocent Soul amidst the Scorn of the Multitude, the Grief and Despair of his Friends, and the most painful Wounds of Nails and Spears, of Thorns and Scourges. You may imagine now with what Scorn and Aversion a soft *Asian*, a covetous *Jew*, or a proud ambitious *Roman*, look'd upon this kind of Life and Death, so laborious, so hard, so poor, so inglorious, so painful; you may imagine how sower and melancholy this kind of Religion appear'd to those Eyes, and how few Followers this mournful, tragick Philosophy was like to draw after it: How much did they prefer the Luxury and Splendor of an *Herod* before the Labours and Travels, the Fasts and Prayers of a melancholy Enthusiast, as they thought our Lord? the Power and Greatness of a *Roman* Governor before the Obscurity and Reproach of a forlorn and abandon'd Christ? the Riches of an High-Priest before the Poverty of a Carpenter's Son? and any Death before that of the crucify'd Jesus? Alas! what do I talk of the Soft and the Luxurious, the Covetous and the Ambitious

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Ambitious? this was a Spectacle too melancholy for the Disciples themselves. They who were us'd to Hardships, and had no great Hopes to flatter them with in this World, and kept him Company in his Travels and his Poverty, would follow no further than *Gethsemane*. Some few, who were too little to provoke any Danger by their Presence, stood afar off when he hung upon the Cross. But when he had given up the Ghost, all their Hearts fainted and their Hopes droop'd; they hoped indeed that *this had been he who should have restored Israel*, Luke xxiv. 21. and so far they follow'd him; but when that Hope expir'd with him, a Religion made up of an austere Life and bitter Death, was too ghastly as yet for the Faith of a Disciple to look upon. But stay but a little, and the time will come when their Faith shall be resolv'd and firm enough, not only to look upon, but court Death in all its Pangs and Horrors, *i. e.* when they shall have seen the bright side of the Cloud, the triumphant Part of our Saviour's History. At the end of three Days he resum'd that Life which he had laid down upon the Cross, Angels roll'd away the Stone from the Mouth of his Sepulchre, and our triumphant Saviour putting off his Grave-Cloaths and Mortality together, rose like the Sun out of another

another World, only to die no more. Now he is return'd to the Embraces and Adorations of his poor Disciples again; now their Sorrows, like Morning Clouds, break into Light and Joy, and Despair and Compassion change into Triumphs and Worship; now how do they chide their treacherous Fears, and reproach themselves with their unworthy Jealousies? Now they recall to mind the Words of their beloved Master, comparing all with the Event: How true is he whom the *Jews* persecuted as an Impostor, and they themselves doubted and forsook? Now how happy is their poor despicable Master? How great is their crucify'd Lord? Now they upbraid themselves with the Meanness of their former Ambition, their Hopes have a nobler Flight, and they begin to think of another kind of Kingdom than an earthly *Jerusalem*; which glorious Hopes they were abundantly confirm'd in when their Master *led them forth out of Jerusalem as far as Bethany; and lifting up his Hands and blessing them: while he blessed them he was parted from them, and carry'd up to Heaven*, Luke xxiv. 50. where he sits at the Right-hand of the Throne of God circled in Rays of Glory, entertain'd by eternal Joys and Pleasures, and invested with the supreme Power over Angels and Men. *Behold*

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bold you Despisers and wonder ! See how much greater than Angels he is, who in Obedience to his God, was when on Earth in the Form of a Servant ! See into what eternal Pleasures his praying, fasting, laborious Life, has now translated him ! See what a Throne his Cross has purchas'd him, and what a Heaven has receiv'd him out of his Sepulchre ! There no Crouds of insolent Jews and Gentiles flock about him to revile and mock him, but Crouds of Angels throng about his Throne to adore him ; there he suffers neither Shame nor Poverty, neither Hunger nor Thirst, neither Travail nor Pain ; there he weeps nor fasts no more ; there neither the Insolence of Gentiles nor the Malice of Jews reach him ; only the Prayers and Praises of his Saints offer'd like Incense ascend before him ; Love, or Pity, or Compassion, is all that this inferior World can raise in him. Now let the Soft, the Gay, the Ambitious, condemn Religion if they can, as a fowre, melancholy thing ; now let them laugh at our Self-denial and Devotion, as Enthusiasm and Folly, if they can. Certainly were the Portion of a Christian in this Life nothing but Misery, Misery as pure and sincere as the Joy, Misery as fix'd and steddy and unmoveable as the Peace and Serenity of the Perfect, yet we could not but
acknow-

acknowledge that Heaven even thus were a cheap Purchase; and that even thus the Sufferings and Afflictions of this present Life, which are but for a Moment, *are not worthy to be compar'd to that eternal Weight of Glory which shall one Day be reveal'd.* What Prospect can the Sinner form to himself so glorious, so delightful, as is this Kingdom prepar'd for the true Disciples and Followers of Jesus? Or what can the strictest, the most exalted, or the most afflicted and persecuted Christian ever suffer, which he would not be ready to suffer over again for this Joy and Crown which is set before him, if he could not otherwise obtain it?

The Use of this Contemplation is twofold.

1. To reform the Opinion of the World concerning Happiness or Blessedness.

2. To confirm the Christian in Patience and Perseverance.

1. It tends to reform, &c. The World generally judges of the Happiness of Men by their present Possessions; they judge those happy whose Grandeur and Prosperity dazzles the weak Eyes of little People; but this Discourse teaches us that this is a fatal Error; that the Followers and Imitators of the blessed

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fed Jesus are the only happy Men; this is the Judgment of Faith, this is the Judgment of Truth: *Blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the poor in Spirit; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness; blessed are the pure in Heart*; blessed, in a word, are all they that tread in the Steps of the blessed Jesus, by the constant Practice of Humility, Meekness, Self-denial, Charity, Devotion; these only are blessed, whatever Rank or Quality they are of, whatever Station they are in, whatever their Circumstances be in the World; *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*. The deluded, unthinking Multitude may be led if they will by Show and Pageantry; they may admire and envy the Wealthy, the Powerful, the Gay and Gaudy, the Men of Means and Worship; nay, what is more, these Men may be so senseless as to admire and applaud themselves; for thus the Psalmist observes, *Psal. x. 3. The Wicked boasteth of his Hearts Desire, and bleisseth the Covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth*. But notwithstanding all this, they are in truth and reality poor and naked, blind, diseased, and miserable; they inherit Emptiness and Vanity, hollow, deceitful Comforts; the Eye is not satisfy'd with seeing, nor the Ear with hearing; and even this Dream, this Day, this airy Vision, will pass away in a Moment:

ment: *For the World passeth away, and the Lusts thereof*, 1 John ii. 17. And then whose shall all these things be? Or, which alas! is a more important Enquiry, whose shall all these worldly, these sensual Wretches themselves be? To whom shall they belong? I tremble to think of their Abode! I tremble to think what must be their Portion! Who then must not conclude the Religious alone happy, the Irreligious miserable, whatever be the difference of their outward Circumstance? *Dives* is dead, and dwells in scorching Flames; *Lazarus* dy'd too, but he was carry'd by Angels into the Bosom of *Abraham*, and there he enjoys an undisturb'd Rest; which think you is the happier? or who would have been accounted so by those of their Times, could they have foreseen the different State of both to all Eternity? The Disciples when they had seen our Lord ascend up from the Mountains of *Bethany* into Heaven, are said to have *return'd into Jerusalem with exceeding great Joy*, and to have been *continually in the Temple blessing and praising God*, Luke xxiv. ult. And yet this Joy was nothing to that which they feel now in Heaven. Which think you the happier, the afflicted, persecuted Disciples, or the rich and powerful Persecutors? which think you the happier, the mean, despis'd

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spis'd and revil'd Followers of Jesus, or those who fill'd the Places of Gain, and Power, and Honour in that State? Reform therefore your Opinions, and judge of Things aright, and learn to believe firmly, that they, and they only are happy who know God and follow Jesus.

2. *To confirm the Christian in Patience and Perseverance.* Be not discourag'd, neither by those inward Conflicts which you maintain against your inbred Corruptions, or by any outward Difficulties which you encounter with in the World; for *in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not. Be faithful unto Death, and God will give you the Crown of Life.* Do not think it hard that you must deny your selves those Sensualities which the World enjoys. Envy not the Ease nor Prosperity of Sinners, but still remember that your *Kingdom, like our Saviour's, is not of this World;* but that the Day will come when your *patient continuance in well-doing will be rewarded with Glory, Honour, and Immortality.*

What then tho' you should weep and lament whilst the World rejoiceth? What tho' you should mourn whilst the Harp, the Viol and the Tabret are in their Feasts, and Mirth and Laughter crown their Revels? The Day will come when your Sorrow shall be turn'd
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into Joy, when your Watchfulness shall be turn'd into Security, your Abstinence into one eternal Revel of sacred Pleasure, and all your Conflicts into the Triumphs of Victory. *In that Day shall Men return and discern between the Righteous and the Wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.* Therefore I will conclude this Point with the Words of our Saviour to his Disciples, *Luke xvi. 21. Blessed be ye Poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are ye which hunger now, for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh. Blessed are you when Men shall hate, and shall separate you from their Company, and shall reproach you; cast out your Name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that Day, and be exceeding glad; for behold your Reward is great in Heaven; for in like manner did their Fathers unto the Prophets. But wo unto you that are rich, for ye have receiv'd your Consolation; wo unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger; wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep; wo unto you when all Men shall speak well of you, for so did their Fathers to the false Prophets.* There is nothing can be objected against the Force of this Argument, unless the Truth itself of a future State be call'd in question. I come therefore,

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2. To shew you, that the Certainty of a future Life may be inferr'd from the Death and Resurrection of Christ. When so many Demonstrations have been given us of a Life to come, it is no Wonder if Infidelity be reckon'd as damnable a Sin as Immorality, and Hell be prepar'd as well for the Fearful and Unbelievers, as for Whoremongers and Extortioners, and such like; for what more desperate Wickedness can Man be guilty of, than wilfully to oppose all those gracious Methods which God has made use of for his Conviction? It doth therefore highly import every Man to endeavour sincerely to free himself from those Prejudices which harden him against the Belief of the Truth, and to consider seriously what Grounds there are for the Assertion of another Life; and whoever will do this, must soon be convinc'd of the Certainty of it. For in the first place, there is nothing in it that speaks any Contradiction to the Light of Nature; nay, on the contrary, most considering Men (if not desperately enslav'd and totally immers'd in Sensuality) have been apt to embrace this Truth, and to conclude the Reasons for it very strong and cogent; for when they consider'd that the very Frame and Contexture of human Nature doth evince our Obligation to Virtue and

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Goodness, and yet that there was not in this Life, abstracted from another, sufficient Motives and Encouragements to Virtue and Goodness, they did necessarily infer that there was another World, wherein God would punish the Wicked and reward the Righteous; when, secondly, they did consider that the Soul was a Being, whose Operations were of a different nature from those of Bodies, that it had in it a near Resemblance to the divine Being, they concluded, that as it did not consist of Parts extended and divisible, like those of Bodies, so neither could it be mortal and corruptible. Now when a Truth, which does not contradict the Light of Nature, but rather appears consonant to it; when a Truth, imply'd in the very Justice and Goodness of the divine Nature, is asserted by divine Revelation, it seems a Piece either of the most daring Confidence or gross Stupidity to disbelieve it; since for a Man in such a Case to object only, that he cannot conceive it as a thing possible, is to limit and circumscribe the Power of God, and to make our shallow Comprehension the Standard and Measure of God's Omnipotence, which was the Case of the Sadducees: *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God.* And the Absurdity and Presumption of this kind of

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Infidelity is so much the more inexcusable, because in the Works of God we have Instances of a Power sufficient to give a Resurrection to the Dead; for the Resurrection is not a greater Work than the Creation; nor the Immortality of the Soul a more wonderful thing than God's continu'd Preservation of the World. But we have a Proof of a future Life, which doth infinitely exceed all that the Light of Nature can furnish us with, even the Resurrection of Jesus, and his Ascension into Heaven. If Christ be indeed risen, there is no question but the same Power can and will quicken and revive our mortal Bodies which rais'd his; and this is the Foundation of our Faith, which is laid so firm, that neither the Confidence of Atheism nor the Malice of Hell can ever shake it; for if Jesus were not risen, whence was it that so many of the *Jews* themselves, who could never be prevail'd with by those mighty Signs and Wonders which he wrought among them in the Days of his Flesh, were converted by the Preaching of his Disciples afterwards? If Jesus were not risen, whence had those his Disciples, who dispers'd themselves and fled upon his Crucifixion, that resolv'd and undaunted Courage which afterwards out-brav'd both *Jew* and *Gentile*? What could tempt his Followers

lowers to lay down their Lives for his Sake, if he had been really that Malefactor and Impostor the *Jews* accounted him? If Jesus be not risen, whence was the Effusion of the Spirit of God upon his Followers, which shew'd itself in so much Power and Brightness, in so much Sanctity, and so many Miracles, that it dazzled and astonish'd the *Gentile* World into Christianity? Whence had the Discourses of the Apostles such mighty Power and Efficacy, that they made almost as many Converts as they had Hearers? Whence was it that the Name of Jesus did effect such mighty Things, and grew so dreadful to the Devils, the Heathen Gods? Whence, finally, is it that at this Day all wise and good Men, all that do the Will and obey the Commandments of Jesus, are so fully persuaded that he came from God, and return'd back again to God, that they are content on this Assurance to do Violence to their sensual Inclinations, to abstain from all those Things which are so taking and delightful to the World, and whenever God pleases, to quit Life itself on the Hopes of Eternity, rather than commit any thing which might hazard their Interest in Jesus?

If all these things put together be not sufficient to convince us of the Truth of another

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Life, we must for ever despair of effecting it. I may boldly say concerning Jesus and his Disciples to unbelieving Men this Day, what *Abraham* once said concerning *Moses* and the Prophets to the Brethren of *Dives*; if they hear not Jesus and his Disciples, *neither will they believe tho' one rose from the Dead*. Turning my Speech therefore from such as these, I must address my self to such as find themselves incited by these Arguments; and I must beseech such, that you will oft lay to heart the Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead, and by consequence a future Life; for this is the Armour of Faith, by which you will be *able to resist all the Assaults of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil*; this is the Truth which renders the Gospel *the Power of God unto Salvation*. This is that Principle of a new Life that will purify our Hearts, exalt our Affections, fortify and confirm our Resolutions, and enable us with Patience to persevere unto the End.

Thus have I sufficiently treated of the first thing inferr'd from the Passion, Resurrection, and Glory of Jesus; namely, *the Greatness and Certainty of our Reward*. I will now in a Word or two dispatch the second thing; namely,

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2. That the *Example of Jesus* doth convince us of the Possibility and Feasibleness of our *Duty*. It is doubted by some with what Design *St. Paul* proposes here to us the Example of Christ; whether as a Rule and Direction, or as a Motive and Encouragement; whether to teach us what is wisely and prudently to be done by us in the Day of Trial and Temptation, or what is reasonable and possible for us to do: It is doubted, I say, by some, whether the Apostle here mean, Do you do as Jesus did, fix your Eye upon the Joy and Crown which is set before you, as he did, that from thence you may derive Courage and Patience under your Trials, as he did? Or, whether he mean, Let not your Evils and Temptations you are to encounter in the Profession of the Gospel at any time discourage you, but consider that our Lord suffer'd and overcame much greater? Consider that he by Faith triumph'd over Shame and the Cross, and therefore it is reasonable you should do so too, since there is nothing required of you but what he by his own Example has prov'd possible to you. I must confess this latter Sense is that which I am most inclin'd to, because it seems to have the Countenance of the Context; for this is apparently the Design which the Apostle carries

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on in the whole 11th Chapter, and doth not break off, but rather continue in this; he insists upon the glorious Effects of Faith in Men of like Passions with us, and from thence infers, Verse 1. of this Chapter, that it is fit and reasonable that the same Faith should produce the same Effects in us; *Wherefore, seeing we are also compass'd about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us*; and then concludes or compleats his Exhortation or Argument in the Words of my Text, *looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, &c.* the Example of Jesus being likely to be more affecting and moving to them than that of any other whatsoever; partly on the account of the Greatness and Dearness of his Person; partly the Sharpness and Voluntariness of his Sufferings; partly the fresh Remembrance of them; and lastly, on the account of the particular Relation they stood in to him, as they were professedly his Disciples and Followers. Add to all this, that the third Verse doth directly look this way, and is scarce capable of any other Interpretation: *For consider him who endur'd such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your Minds.* And

thus, I think, we may expound *John* xvi. 33. *In this World ye shall have Tribulation; but be of good chear, I have overcome the World; i. e.* Do not despond or be cast down at the Prospect of your Tribulations, for you shall be enabled to overcome the World by the same Spirit and the same Faith I have. I cannot see any thing in this Sense contrary to the Analogy of Faith, much less express Texts of Scripture.

But if it be objected, Christ was God as well as Man, what Encouragement therefore can it be to frail Man, whose Understanding is dark, and his Affections warm and ungovernable; that he who was God and Man sustain'd and overcame those Evils, which are the Dread and Terror of Mankind? What is this to us? It were no Wonder if he, who was so much above our Nature, should be above the Temptations and Weaknesses of it too? What Strength and Consolation can his Victories minister to us, who can never hope to do what he did, because we are not what he was?

To this I answer: The Scripture here and elsewhere considers our Lord as Man, and as Man partaking of *our Infirmities*, and *tempted in all things like unto us*; and in his Sufferings supported, not by his Godhead, but his Faith;
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not by the Second Person of the Trinity within him, but by the Joy that was set before him; and without this it will be very hard to give an Account of those natural Passions, or Weaknesses shall I say, which he discover'd before and in his Crucifixion; before it, when he so earnestly pray'd, *Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me*; in it, when he cry'd out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

If it be here reply'd, Tho' Christ be consider'd as Man, this will not do your Business, for as Man he can never be levell'd and equall'd with us; he could never be in all things like unto us, for he had in him no original Sin, being begot in the Womb of the Virgin *Mary* by the blessed Spirit of God; his Case therefore and ours is not alike; for our Contest, our Fight, is not only against Enemies which attack us from without, but from within too; not only against the World, but our Nature too; for him then and us to endure the same Cross and despise the same Shame, or for him and us to reject the same Temptations to Pleasure or Glory, is not a Matter of equal Difficulty: We are hurry'd on by the blind and passionate Inclinations of a degenerate Nature; but his pure Nature, like purer celestial Fires, had more of Light and

and less of Heat in it, and deriv'd no unruly Appetites from the Contagion of sinful Parents.

Without running into a tedious Digression to debate what original Sin is, how irregular and how strong the Inclinations it consists in, to support the Argument which the Apostle makes use of, it will be enough to say two things.

First, That the Scripture doth no more expect that we should equal the Perfection of our Lord's Virtue than the Purity of his Conception; nor do I contend that any thing the Apostle says doth prove it possible for us to equal the Actions of Christ, but to imitate them; nor can any thing more be our Duty. Next, it must surely be granted, that Jesus carry'd in his human Nature the Desires and Weaknesses inseparable from that Nature, *i. e.* an Aversion to Pain and Death, an Appetite of Refreshment and Ease, an Inclination to the innocent Enjoyments of Life, and such like. If he then was enabled thro' Faith to deny his natural Appetites, to crucify his Nature itself, and to endure Pain, and Torment, and Death, which are utterly contradictory to the first Principles and Inclinations riveted and woven into human Nature; it easily follows, that the same Faith may enable us to
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mortify our corrupt Inclinations ; since they can be no more than natural, they cannot be more deeply rooted in us than his natural Inclinations were in him. This Argument then stands unshaken ; you see an Instance of the mighty Power of Faith in the blessed Jesus, who being Man, encompass'd with like Passions with us, did yet, for the Joy and Glory propos'd to him, undergo all those Afflictions, which were the most sharp and painful that could possibly befall human Nature, and now *he is sat down at the Right-hand of the Throne of God*: Let you and I therefore, who share the same Nature, who have the same Joy and Glory propos'd to us, carefully and frequently regard his End, his Sufferings and Rewards, that we may be encourag'd to crucify those Lusts, which are grown almost as natural as the first and most innocent Appetites of human Nature ; and then, if it shall be necessary, *to resist unto Blood.*

After all this, if it can be shewn that this Interpretation which I have preferr'd cannot be sufficiently defended, I see no necessity of stickling eagerly for it, in order to maintain the Doctrine I here advance of *the Possibility or Practicableness of our Duty* ; for tho' the Example of Christ, if consider'd merely as a Rule or Direction, doth not prove, yet it does
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imply and suppose this. To what purpose were it to advise us to run our Race as Christ did? To what purpose are we exhorted and press'd to walk as he walk'd, if this be impossible? How can he be *the Captain of our Salvation*, if we cannot follow him? Or what Obligation can his Cross pass upon us to imitate him, if it be impossible to do so? Whatever Sense then we put upon the Apostle's Words, we must confess that he can mean nothing less than this; that we are to endure Hardships, as good Soldiers of Christ Jesus; that we must not give back at the Appearance of those Difficulties which our Lord has conquer'd; that tho' we cannot imitate his miraculous Performances, we must his Virtues. This the Scripture every where inculcates. *The same Mind ought to be in us which was in Christ Jesus*, Phil. ii. And we must copy out his Humility, his Charity, his Meekness, his Heavenly-mindedness, his Zeal, his Devotion, his Faith and Patience; it is on these, and no other Terms, that we are to obtain his Crown. *Rev. iii. 21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his Throne.*



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SERMON X.

The Regulation of Pleasure.

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Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God.

THIS is one Character St. Paul in a prophetick Spirit gives us of the last Days, whether of *Jerusalem* or of the World, matters little, and is a Wickedness that will bring down temporal and eternal Vengeance on a sensual World; which is enough to convince us how nearly it imports us to preserve or free our Souls from the Guilt of it: To which that I may contribute what lies in me, I have made choice of these Words; in handling which I shall consider these things.

1. I will discourse of the due Moderation of our Pleasure.
2. I will enquire into the Reasons of our immoderate Love of sensual Pleasure.
3. I will prescribe the Cure of this Disease.
And then,
4. Lastly,

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4. Lastly, I will conclude with an *earnest Exhortation to you to observe those Bounds in your Pleasure which Religion has set us.*

1. *Of the due Moderation of our Pleasure.*

Now that it may appear what this does consist in, I shew you briefly, (1.) what Pleasure Religion does not; and (2.) what it does prohibit.

(1.) That God has not interdicted all Pleasure is manifest; for in the *Old Testament* we are taught, that *the Ways of Wisdom are Ways of Pleasantness, and that all her Paths are Peace*, Prov. iii. 17. and in the *New*, that Religion, even in this Life, is *Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*; and in the other it will be an eternal Jubilee, an everlasting Triumph. But all this, you say, is to be understood only of a spiritual and divine Pleasure. It is true; and this is that Pleasure which Religion does especially recommend to us; but yet it does not *condemn* that which springs from the Enjoyments of this World, and the good Things of it, and flows in upon the Soul thro' the Senses; I say, it does not condemn it *wholly* and in *general*. I need not tell you, that *Solomon* in his *Ecclesiastes*, and elsewhere, exhorts us to a chearful and grateful Enjoyment of the good Things of this Life,

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Life, as an Act of solid Wisdom. *Eccles. iii.*
2. *A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.* Ver. 12, 13.
I know that there is no good in them, but for a Man to rejoice, and to do good in his Life. And also that every Man should eat, and drink, and enjoy the Good of all his Labour; it is the Gift of God. I need not tell you, that God himself proposed Peace and Plenty, Glory and Victory, as the Encouragement and Portion of his People, and that he instituted many festival Solemnities, to be an essential Part of their Religion; by all which he has plainly taught us, that Impurity and Turpitude is not inseparably mix'd with the Fruition of outward Things; and that an Affluence of temporal Blessings ought not to alienate, but to enkindle our Affections for our great Patron and Benefactor; and that it is natural enough at once *to worship him and rejoice before him.* Nor let us think this favours too rankly of a low and earthy Dispensation, for it agrees exactly with the Spirit and Genius of the *New Testament.* To what purpose has Religion *the Promise of this Life as well as the other,* if either we might not enjoy outward temporal Blessings, or were forbidden to take any Pleasure in their Enjoyment? Were this once suppos'd, what Encouragement could

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Length of Days and Prosperity be to the Obedience of Children? and yet it is propos'd as one in *Ephes. vi.* as well as *Exod. xx.* Alas! on this Supposal a long Life would be but a fore Punishment, and Prosperity a Snare, a Curse, not a Blessing; finally, on this Supposal we should not with our Saviour pronounce the Meek blessed, because they inherit the Earth, but the Sons of Wrath and Passion, because they embroil it, and seldom live out half their Days.

Religion then it is plain does not prohibit all Pleasure in general, it invites us even to a holy Riot and Luxury in spiritual Pleasure; it refines and sanctifies our sensitive Pleasure, and then allows it us, *i. e.* it allows whatever Pleasure, even of this kind, can arise from a wise and rational, from a moderate and grateful Enjoyment of the Things of this World; but then what that Enjoyment is which we may call rational and moderate, is the Query; to resolve which, I am next to consider,

(2.) What the Pleasure is, what the Love of it, which Religion prohibits; and here, I think, two things are plain from Scripture beyond Dispute. 1. That there are some Kinds or Instances of Pleasure utterly forbidden by God. 2. That we are forbidden an

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excessive Fondness or Dotage upon Pleasure even in those Instances which are allow'd us.

1. There are some forbidden Kinds or Instances of Pleasure; such are, Adultery, Fornication, Chambering, Wantonness, Rioting, Drunkenness, Gluttony, the Pride of Life, and such like; and much more all unnatural and dishonourable Lusts. The Reasons of this Prohibition are plain and unanswerable; for these Kinds of Pleasure contradict the Light of Nature, and the Design of our Creation; invade the Rights of Mankind, corrupt and deprave our Natures, debauch and embroil the World, grieve, quench, and do despite to the Holy Spirit; no Dexterity, no Management can ever cure the Malignity of these Vices, nor prevent the Mischief and ill Effects of them; no Wit, no Sophistry can excuse or palliate them; and nothing but the Violence of Lust, or the Impudence of Atheism, can seduce Men into an Opinion that they are harmless and indifferent. *Eph. v. 6. Let no Man deceive you with vain Words, for these things sake comes the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience.* This then is one Bound set us, but not the only one; we are not only to refrain from forbidden Instances of Pleasure, but also,

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2. We are commanded to moderate our Passion even for those Kinds of Pleasure which are allow'd us: *Love not the World, nor the Things of the World*, Joh. xii. If we be Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God, it matters little of what nature this Pleasure be; unlawful Pleasures wound and destroy the Conscience; lawful ones, if we set no Bounds to them, lull and enchant it; the one openly and directly overthrow the Principles of Religion, the other more slyly and subtilly undermine them; the one beget in us Enmity and Aversion against Goodness, the other Coldness and Indifference for it; the one produce a scandalous and infamous Life, the other a fruitless and a sensual one; both are Diseases, both fatal; only the one is a more loathsome, the other a more inoffensive one.

What difference there will be in the Fortunes of these different Kinds of Voluptuaries at the last Day, I determine not; it is but a small Comfort to those wretched Creatures, who are intoxicated and infatuated by carnal and worldly (tho' as to the Matter of them innocent) Pleasures, that the Furnace shall be heated seven times hotter for the Incestuous and the Sodomite, the Adulterer and the Sot, than for them. But peradventure you will judge this Rule express'd with too much Latitute, and you are desirous to know what are

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the Measures of a lawful Passion or innocent Pleasure, and by what Boundaries and Marks you are to judge of the Moderation of Excess of your Affections; for preventing all Mistakes in this Matter, I will advise you three things.

I. Consider well for what Ends God allows us temporal Pleasure; and these are certainly to ease the Toils and sweeten the Troubles of Life; to refresh the Mind and recruit the Body; to enlarge our Notion of divine Goodness; to minister occasion to our Thanks and Praise of him; to render us more chearful and vigorous in his Service. From hence it follows plainly, that we must take care that our Enjoyments strengthen and revive our Bodies, not wear, not impair them; that they bring Ease and Delight to the Mind, not disturb and perplex it; that they quicken and qualify us for Religion, not incapacitate and indispose us. This will cut off all study'd and costly Preparations for Pleasure, and Excesses in our Entertainments of it, which are so far from being a true and rational Satisfaction, that they are the Burden of the Body, and the Travail of the Mind; whereas on the quite contrary, were we modest in our Provision for, and temperate in the Use of our Pleasures, as this would contribute not a little to moderate our Affections

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for them, so would it contribute too not a little to the Vigor of the Body and Chearfulness of the Mind, which is the best Frame and Condition we can be in with respect to Virtue and Religion; for a vigorous Body and chearful Mind are the most proper Instruments of the divine Glory.

2. Consider what Power Pleasure has over you, what Influence it has upon you. Pleasure is the Master of Fools, but the Servant of the Wise; it is the Business of the one, but the Diversion of the other. Whenever therefore Pleasure obscures the Light, or subverts the Liberty of the Mind; whenever it supplants our Modesty or Magnanimity; whenever it enfeebles the Vigor and Activity of Virtue; in a word, whenever it impairs our Faith, abates and extinguishes our Love of God, takes off our Gust and Relish of spiritual Joy, and enslaves us to the World, or any thing in it; then tho' it should court us under the Shape of an Angel of Light, tho' it wear all the Smiles of Friendship and Innocence, it is an Enemy, it is a Devil.

3. Your Business is not to enquire how far you may enjoy, but rather to consider what Obligations you lie under to the highest degree of Purity and Abstinence; remember that you have in your Baptism renounc'd the
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World and the Flesh, and that the Friendship and Caresses of both *do war against the Soul*; remember that you *are Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth*, that you *seek a better Country*, and expect an *Inheritance of Glory*; remember that you are to tread in the Steps of the *holy and humble Jesus*; remember that you are to *adorn the Gospel of Christ*, to *show forth the Praises of him, who hath called you out of Darknefs into his marvellous Light*; and to make others in love with Religion by the Innocence and Beauty, by the Purity and Splendor of your Conversation. Consider, lastly, that *the World passes away, and the Lust thereof, but he that doth the Will of God abideth forever*; then you will easily discern that we are *to use this World as not abusing it, and to enjoy as tho' we possess'd it not*; and that our Hearts are to be fill'd with Expectation, and ravish'd by the Prospects of the Glories of another World, that we may live so as becomes those who are to have their *Conversation in Heaven*.

From what I have said it appears, (1.) That Religion doth not prohibit all Pleasure in general, nor is it to be imagin'd it should; for Pleasure resulting from the free and natural Exercise of all the Powers and Faculties of our Nature, we may as easily renounce our

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Beings, as entirely renounce the Love of it; no, all that Religion endeavours to restrain is, the Irregularity of our Appetites, and the Inordinacy of our Affections. And from hence it follows, (2.) That whatever Restraints are of human Device, whether in the Matter or Degree of them, unless they have a direct Tendency to subdue a Lust, to improve a Virtue, or to quicken our Relish of spiritual Pleasure, are silly and fantastick, if not superstitious. Having thus fix'd the Bounds of Pleasure, and of our Love of it, I proceed,

2. *To enquire into the Source and Cause of this our Degeneracy in this Point.* St. Paul, Rom. vii. and elsewhere tells us, that *there is a Law in the Members, warring against the Law of the Mind*; and we shall not wonder at the unhappy Issue of this Contest, if we consider these several things.

1. We are (if I may so speak) first Body, then Soul; first in this Sense too, that which is natural, then that which is spiritual: We are born, as it is in *Job xi. 12. like a wild Asses Colt*, and advance into rational Creatures by slow and laborious Steps; so that our Pretensions to bodily Pleasure gather Strength before our Reason be in a Condition to controul them,

2. The

2. The Body moves with a more uncontrollable Violence than the Mind; our Notions of spiritual Beauty and Perfection are faint and vanishing, but the Images of sensual Good are clear and lively, being immediately deriv'd from the Objects of our Sense, which make very deep and lasting Impressions upon us; how far this is owing to the Fall of our first Parents, by which the Brightness of the Mind was fully'd, the Power and Authority of Reason diminish'd, and the Crasis and Constitution of the Body in some sort deprav'd and infected, I will not now examine.

3. The Pleasures of Sense are more ready and obvious, more common and plentiful than those of Reason. Wisdom must be search'd for *as for hid Treasures*, as *Solomon* speaks, *Prov. ii. 4.* and the Mind of Man must be rais'd, purify'd and prepar'd by Meditation and Discipline to relish and enjoy it; but there is no need to raise the Imagination or increase the Appetite to enable us to relish the Sweets of the World, and the luscious Draughts of sensual Pleasure; we are naturally dispos'd and prepar'd for this, and need but let loose the Reins to Lust and Fancy; besides, there are scarce any Parts of the World so barren and desert, as not to be able to furnish us with Temptations and Allurements enough;

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enough; the Temptations to sensual Pleasure assault us in every Place, and almost every Hour; but it is otherwise with rational and spiritual Pleasure, the Invitations to it are not so frequent, the Examples of an eminent Virtue are few, Discourses that enkindle Devotion and Charity, or that nourish and strengthen our Faith, are very few.

But if this be so, you will be apt to object; If Man be thus prone to Pleasure, and Pleasure (as is generally confess'd) be so apt to betray us into Sin, whence is it that God contriv'd us thus? How could it consist with the Wisdom and Goodness of God to permit us to come into the World with such a Bias upon our Nature, to expose us to such strong Temptations, and to such evident and dreadful Dangers? To vindicate the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of God, you may consider,

I. Whatever we owe to our first Parents Fall, our Destruction is finally to be imputed to ourselves; our wilful Negligence and Folly perfect that Ruin which the Sin of *Adam* gave some weak and imperfect beginning to; he indeed sow'd the first Seeds of our Corruption, but vicious Examples, irrational Modes and Customs, false and wretched Notions of Pleasure,

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Pleasure, foolish and wicked Principles, have water'd, cherish'd and ripen'd it.

2. To make Men capable of temporal Blessings, it was wholly necessary that he should be capable of sensitive Pleasure; to what purpose had God enrich'd and adorn'd the World with so much Variety and so much Beauty, if he had not endu'd Man also with a Capacity of discovering and enjoying it?

3. God has made sufficient Allowance and Provision to gratify Man's natural Propension to Pleasure; he gives Man all things richly to enjoy; and if a Man cannot quench his Thirst as well at the Water of his own Fountain as his Neighbour's; if the Grapes of his own Vineyard taste not as sweet to him as those of another's; this, I doubt, is more truly to be charg'd on a contracted and voluntary, than on *original* Corruption.

4. When God implanted in us Inclinations to Pleasure, he resolv'd to make the Restraint and Regulation of them, in some peculiar Instances and particular Degrees, the Test of our Obedience, the Trial of our Faith, the Matter of our Virtue, and Occasion of our Reward.

5. God implanted in us general and strong Inclinations to Pleasure, that the Taste of it here might enkindle an unquenchable Thirst
after

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after it hereafter; the Taste of temporal Pleasure might invite us to eternal; the Taste of weak and faint Pleasure, might raise in us an impatient Desire of that which will be truly ravishing and transporting.

6. And lastly, that we might not be born away by the Sollicitations of outward Objects, or the Stream of sensitive Inclinations,

God has also implanted in our Souls Propensions to rational and virtuous Pleasure, Faculties of discerning spiritual Beauties and moral Charms; he has also *brought Life and Immortality to Light*, and has almost laid open to our View the Glories and Entertainments of Heaven; and finally, to quicken our Desires, and impregnate our Minds with an irresistible Ardour for those inexpressible Pleasures, he doth vouchsafe us the Influxes of his Spirit, *i. e.* Irradiations of a divine Vigor, Sparks of a celestial Flame, Emanations of a divine Life. When these Things are consider'd, whatever we have suffer'd by the Fall of *Adam*, whatever Corruption we may have deriv'd from that Fountain from whence we have deriv'd our Life, we shall have little reason to impeach the Justice or question the Goodness of God.

Let us then not complain of our Restraints, but adore and bless God for our Enjoyments;

let

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let us not abuse those Capacities of and Inclinations to Pleasure which God has endu'd us with, but let us make them the Seeds of Virtue, the Incentives of Religion, and our Pursuit of Heaven, the natural Region of solid and lasting Pleasure; in a word, let us so regulate our Appetites and govern our Enjoyments, that they prove not injurious to our rational Delights here, or prevent our eternal Extasies and Joys hereafter.

To which End I now proceed to the third thing propos'd; namely, *the Cure of this Disease or Disorder of our Nature, the immoderate Love of sensual Pleasure.* And here I must prescribe four things.

1. First, you must endeavour to shake off the Authority of ill Example, and break the Force of ill Customs and senseless Fashions; you must rectify your mistaken Notions of Pleasure, and cashier those erroneous Principles which are set up to justify and countenance them; you must endeavour to persuade yourselves throughly that an enlighten'd Reason ought to be the sole Rule of Life; that true Pleasure is the Result of regular and rational Enjoyments; that there are no Pleasures worthy a rational Man, and much less becoming a Christian, which are not pure and innocent, calm and lasting; that whatever

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Satisf-

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Satisfaction will not bear the Test of Reason and the Reflection of Conscience, is a Snare or a Crime; in a word, that the Diversion or Fruition of a wise Man should have nothing in it so mean or silly as to create a Blush, nor so impure and polluted as to create Disturbance, Remorse, and Regret of Mind.

2. You must by Meditation invite, and by Prayer earnestly importune the holy Spirit of God to reside in you, that so the Vigor and Efficacy of a supernatural Principle may support the Weakness, purify the Corruption of a deprav'd Nature, and curb the Impetuosity with which it is hurry'd on towards sensual Pleasure.

3. Because the Mind of Man cannot be always upon the Wing, because it cannot be always intent upon divine Things, therefore we ought to be furnish'd with innocent and virtuous Diversions; and sure no Man can want these; there are the little Complacencies of natural Affection; the Sweets of a virtuous Love; the Satisfaction of a sincere Friendship; and the engaging Pleasures of an ingenious and obliging Conversation. But above all, and in the first place, it were to be wish'd that we would enlarge and enrich our Minds with some sort of useful and entertaining Knowledge; for I persuade my self that
one

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one great reason why many spend their Time so ill is, because they know not how to spend it well: And yet how vast a Theatre is the World? How curious and wonderful are its Scenes? How numerous the Actors? How strange the Events that appear upon it? How many delightful Histories have we of the Passions, Lives and Actions of Men? Of the Changes and Revolutions of Fortune, both publick and private? Of the Customs, Laws, and Manners of different Nations? How many others of the Powers, Properties, and Wonders of Nature? How many Arts and Sciences are there serviceable to the Needs or Pleasures, to the Dignity or Ornament of human Life? When I consider these things, I cannot but wonder that any one, whatever his Capacity, whatever his Education be, should, if it be not his own Fault, want Ways to entertain the spare and void Hours of Life virtuously and pleasantly, without being forced to have recourse to Drunkenness and Gluttony, Pride or Uncleaness, the Snares and Toils, the Cheats and Plagues of a stupid, miserable Life.

4. Lastly, By all the Ways of Religion secure to your selves a plentiful Portion of spiritual Pleasure; drink deep, if you can, of the Joys of the Spirit; remove the Scruples and renounce

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renounce the Reserves which chill the Confidence of Conscience, and grieve the Spirit: *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.* Be frequent in the Exercise of Faith and Love; an ardent Love of God, and an Assurance of Heaven, will be an inexhaustible Fountain of Pleasure; this Manna will make us disgust and disdain the Garlick and Onions of *Egypt*; this will exalt and transmute every thing it intermingles with; this will tinge all our Passions with its own Lustre, and give one Bent and Motion to all our Powers and Actions: Were but our Souls throughly possess'd with this, Musick and Dances would fill us, as it did the Prophets, and the Sons of the Prophets, only with rapturous and divine Thoughts; Beauty and Grandeur, like that of the Tabernacle or the Temple, would elevate our Minds to those heavenly things, of which they are faint Images; Retirement would not afford our Vices a Shelter and Asylum, but invite us, as it did *Isaac* in the Field, to meditate and contemplate *the wonderful things of God*; and our Society and Conversation would build up our Faith and inflame our Devotion; and even our very Feasts and Entertainments would be Banquets of Philosophy, or *Feasts of Charity*; some good thing would be promoted by them,

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them, or some wise one would be learn'd in them; and so would be verify'd that of the Apostle, *God would be all in all to us*; he would be *all*; as he is the Source and Original of all our Blessings, so would he be the Center of all our Desires; and not only *all*, but *in all*; we should meet with him in every Place; we should enjoy him in every Object. O blessed State! wherein one cannot tell whether the Holiness or the Happiness be the greater; wherein Pleasure raises and improves our Virtue, and Virtue feeds and nourishes our Pleasure. Which State that you may all attain to, I come now,

4. In the last place, to exhort you earnestly to observe those Bounds which Religion has fix'd our Pleasure and our Love of it. I might here lay before you the many mischievous Effects of the immoderate Love of Pleasure; such are, an infatuated and guilty Mind, a diseas'd and enfeebled Body, an embroil'd and broken Fortune, and a blasted Reputation, disorderly, ruinous Families, and untimely Deaths, miserable Orphans, miserable Widows, in this only the less pitiable, that they were once more miserable Children, more miserable Wives. I might shew you how this Passion defeats itself; how the feve-

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rish Thirst of Pleasure, I mean sensual Pleasure, bereaves us of the calm and unspotted Satisfaction of a virtuous Life, and either prevents or quenches the Joy of the Holy Ghost, which St. Peter calls a *Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*. I might, finally, shew you how it pulls down the Judgments of God upon us, and fills our Lives with Storm and Tempest: I might put you in mind that we are *Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth*, that we have *here no abiding City*; that to promise ourselves any Satisfaction solid or lasting, is to delude ourselves with Expectations contradictory to the very nature of things: I might beseech, I might conjure you to remember that you profess the Cross, that you are the Members of a crucify'd Head, and that you are to tread in those Steps an humble, self-denying Jesus and suffering Lord has set you: But I will confine myself to this one Consideration; first, what Influence the Day of Calamity; and secondly, the Day of Judgment, ought to have upon us with respect to our Love of Pleasure.

1. The Day of Calamity. It is a Folly to flatter ourselves in the Words of the Psalmist, *I said in my Prosperity I shall never be removed*. Evils there are which we have reason
first

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first or last to expect; and others there are, which like Fire, and Storms, and Earthquakes, come unexpected upon us; and both do plainly teach us, that we *ought not to boast of to morrow; for we know not what a Day may bring forth.* Now tho' this Consideration ought not to embitter the present Good, or anticipate the future Evil, yet certainly this ought to restrain us from those Pleasures which will sharpen the Edge and increase the Weight of our Misfortunes, or which will soften and disable us to bear them, and make us poorly and dishonourably sink under them; and this is the constant Effect of all sinful Sensualities, it not only exhausts the Fortune and impairs the Body, but also weakens and impoverishes the Mind, fills it with a guilty Shame and Regret for what is past, and with Perplexity and Anxiety about what is to come; and what a miserable thing is a wretched *Epicurean* or a *Sadducee*, when his guilty Soul begins to rage and fester, and he becomes a greater Torment to himself than his Calamity can be? *The Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infir- mity, but a wounded Spirit who can bear?*

But if we should suppose the Conscience of the Sensualist to continue stupid and insensible, yet still it is destitute of all Principles,

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of all Strength, of all Hope, it has nothing to support it, nothing remains but that Softness, that Passion, that Dotage, which does but exasperate his Troubles and Misfortunes. Ah! wretched sure is that Soul which in its Agonies and Distresses has neither Reason nor Revelation to support it, a good Conscience nor the Spirit of God to comfort it, which in the last Ebb of Life and Fortune is tortur'd with a fruitless Desire of those sensual Satisfaction which are past for ever, and yet has nothing better to fly to. Let no Man therefore think that I go about to infringe his just Liberty, or disturb his virtuous Enjoyments, while I exhort you all so to pass your good Days, that you may not add to the Trouble of your evil ones; to practise that Virtue and Moderation in Prosperity, that may afford you Support and Comfort in Adversity; this is not to sowre and imbitter our present Enjoyments, but to secure and guard them; it is not to terrify our Minds, but to fortify them; it is not to enslave our selves by idle and vain Fears, but it is to set our selves free from them, by a just Moderation and wise Resolutions grounded on the very Nature of Things. But if temporal Calamity be too cold and blunt a Motive to Moderation, let us in the next place,

2. Reflect

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2. Reflect a little upon a Judgment to come.

After *Solomon* had ironically invited the young Man to let loose the Rein to a dissolute Passion, he adds, *But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.* Many are the Contemplations which a Judgment to come suggests to us, sufficient to chill the Heat and curb the Violence of the most ungovernable Passion; I will content my self with laying before you two or three.

1. If there be a Heaven to reward Abstinence, which is imply'd in a Judgment to come; ah! how much do we lose by our sensual Indulgences? The Pleasures of Sin are temporal, but the Rewards of Virtue are eternal; temporal did I say, alas! the longest Life is but a Span of Time, and how little of that Space does Pleasure fill up? Nay, sinful Pleasures are never drawn off clear, there is Mud and Sediment in every single Draught; we scarce taste it before it ends in Bitterness and Repentance, in Shame and Fear. The Pleasures of Sin are like the gaudy Scenes the Devil presented our Saviour on the Top of a Mountain, when all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glories thereof, appear'd and disappear'd in the same Moment: And is it

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for this that we quit those Pleasures which are as eternal as God, which shall look young and verdant, when we have enjoy'd them as many Millions of Ages as there are little Drops in the vast Ocean? And yet this is not all, there is as vast a Disproportion in the Worth and Excellence, as in the Duration of sinful Pleasure and heavenly; the one is in intrinsick Value and Perfection as much above the other as Heaven is above Earth, or Angels, I had almost said God, is above Man. Will not this do neither? Then consider,

Secondly, If there be a Hell to punish Sensuality, which is suppos'd in a Judgment to come; ah! how dearly do we purchase every sinful Indulgence? A Hell! A Dungeon! A Lake of Fire and Brimstone! A Fire that shall never be extinguish'd! A *Worm that never dies!* A Region of Pain and Sorrow, *where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth,* and that for ever! Ah! how can the soft Soul of a sensual Sinner think on these things! Ah, Eternity! said once an *Epicurean*, whom I very well knew, drawing nigh the last Hour of Life; ah, Eternity! said he, setting his Teeth, and darting wishful and distracted Looks on those about him; and there he stopt; he said no more; more
he

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he could not say, more he needed not say; by this one Word he laid open to all that stood by, all those dismal Thoughts, all those gloomy and tormenting Fears that harass'd and distress'd the departing Soul. I leave this Example for such as are concern'd in it to ponder upon; he that likes such a Death may lead such a Life.





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S E R M O N XI.

The Fruitlessnes, Shamefulness, and
Punishment of Sin.

R O M. VI. 21.

*What Fruit had ye then in those things whereof
ye are now ashamed? For the End of those
things is Death.*

WHEN I consider in the first place
that Sin is a voluntary Transgres-
sion of the divine Law, and consequently an
Act of Choice, not Necessity; and next, what
God has done to prevent and repress it; that
this is the great End for which he has be-
stow'd his Son and his Spirit upon the World,
the great End which incessantly employs his
ever wise and ever waking Providence; when
I consider, lastly, that our refraining from it
will be rewarded with a thousand Blessings,
too great, too perfect to be fully either con-
ceiv'd or enjoy'd till we be made equal with
Angels; and our Commission of it punish'd
with

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with as many thousand Plagues, Plagues in-
numerable and insupportable, Plagues which
Devils, as wilful and as wicked, as strong and
hardy as they are, *believe and tremble at*, James
ii. 19. when, I say, I put these things toge-
ther, I begin to wonder that there should be
such a thing in the World as a *Sinner*; that
Man, endu'd with Reason, should be capable
of so much Folly, rather so much Boldness
and desperate Madness as Sin amounts to;
and yet, alas! Sin is the Business of the Fool,
and the Temptation of the Wise; the worst
live in it, and the best of Men fall into it;
few there be that escape or free themselves
from the *Corruption that is in the World thro'*
Lust; and fewer far, who being escap'd and
made Partakers even of a divine Nature, do
not one time or other relapse into some Acts
and Instances of it. In this Case what shall
one think? Sure there must be a secret Ma-
gick in Sin, there must be a resistless Force in
Temptation: On the quite contrary, if my
Text be true, as sure it must be, it is hard to
guess what there is or can be in Sin that en-
snares and entangles us; it is hard to find out
or imagine what Allurements or Invitation
there can be in it; for the Apostle's Indict-
ment against it consists of three such Articles,
that if they be made good, all that can be said
of

of the Sinner is that which the Scriptures indeed usually say of him, that *the God of this World has blinded him*; that his *foolish Heart is darken'd*; that he is cheated and abus'd by the *Deceitfulness of Sin* and the Bewitcheries of his own Lust. Now these three things are,

I. That Sin is a fruitless Work : *What Fruit had ye then in those things?*

II. That it is a shameful one; *whereof ye are now asham'd?*

III. That the Wages of it is Death : *For the End of those things is Death.* By which that we are to understand eternal Punishment, need not be prov'd in a Christian Congregation.

I. Of the *Fruitlessness of Sin.* I know a Heaven and a Hell are the great, but I think not the sole Motives of the Gospel; the temporal Advantages of Virtue, and Mischiefs of Vice; the true and lasting Satisfaction of the one, the Emptiness and Disappointments of the other, may be allow'd their proper Place and subordinate Energy; these may sometimes affect Men who have not Faith enough to be wrought upon by a Heaven and a Hell:

I cannot

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I cannot tell whether these single and alone are sufficient to convert a Sinner, but certainly they may prepare and dispose him to Conversion; or to speak closely and properly to this Point, Reason may begin what Faith must perfect; inferior Motives, low and temporal ones, may enkindle those Desires, and produce those Purposes, which Arguments of a higher nature, I mean those contain'd in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, and a Judgment to come, must nourish and strengthen, ripen and consummate. Let no one therefore think my Pains quite lost if I insist a little while on this first Determent from Sin; namely, *its Fruitlessness*; this, at least if prov'd, will add Force to those Arguments which follow; for it is wretched Nonsense indeed to incur Shame here and Damnation hereafter for Sin, and reap no present Fruit from it neither. To clear this Matter then, and balance the Accompts of the Sinner rightly, I will consider these two things. 1. What Advantages the Sinner reaps from Vice, which the good Man cannot from Virtue. 2. What he forfeits thro' the one, which the Good enjoy thro' the other.

1. Then let us enquire what the Sinner can find in Vice. *Pleasure* and *Profit* are the two
great

great Idols of the Sinner. But it is very remarkable, that if Sinners themselves may be Judges, these two can never be the Portion of the same Man. *Pleasure* is too vain, gay, idle and expensive, to be render'd subservient to Interest or *Profit*; and the Love of Gain or *Profit* is too sordid, restless and laborious, to minister to *Pleasure*. Accordingly we find that the common Language and general Sense of the World, make *Pleasure* the great End and Design of the Luxurious, the Intemperate, the Slothful and Incontinent; and *Profit* that of the Covetous or Ambitious. The Sinner then cannot unite these two, and divided they are of little Worth; for *Pleasure* cannot be long maintain'd or supported, while there is no Regard had to Interest; and a violent Pursuit of Interest, without a Conjunction or Mixture of *Pleasure*, is Toil, not Life; and whatever Wealth the Sinner may heap up, the best State he can arrive at, is but prosperous Drudgery and fortunate Slavery. But the virtuous Man unites what the Sinner cannot, *Pleasure* and *Profit*; for the Moderation of his Desires, and the Nobleness of his Ends, his Gratitude to God, and a wise and right Use of worldly Things, make his Success and Gains full of *Pleasure* and Delight; and the Modesty and Regularity of his

Diver-

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Diversions and Enjoyments is such, that his Pleasure does not eat up and consume his Substance, or undermine his Interest; but by alleviating the Toil of Life, and increasing the Vigor of his Mind, renders him more fit for the Discharge of his Duty, and more able to pursue the Ends of his temporal Calling.

But be it granted, which very rarely happens, or indeed can, that some Sinners are so wise as not to suffer their Covetousness and Ambition to rob them of their *Pleasure*; and others so fortunate that their *Pleasures* cannot waste or exhaust their Revenue: Let it be granted for once that the Sinner may find *Pleasure* and *Profit* in his Sin; can the good Man find none in Virtue? What? Are Wealth and Honour, Power and Preferment, the Inheritance of the Sinner only? Are these the Prerogative, the Reward of Vice? Not Scripture only, but Experience too, does generally confute this Fancy, pronouncing with one Accord of Wisdom, *Length of Days are in her Right-hand, and in her Left-hand Riches and Honour*, Prov. iii. 16. What then? Is Honour the less taking when it is the Reward of Virtue? Is an Estate the less useful when enjoy'd with Wisdom, and husbanded with Discretion? Is the Prospect of Greatness the less delightful because it stands on a Rock, upon
the

the firm Basis of Justice and Merit? In a word, Is any Gift of Nature or Fortune less valuable because enrich'd and adorn'd by Virtue, preserv'd and employ'd by Wisdom? Experience again, as well as Scripture, does teach us, that all these Possessions are a Snare to the Fool, and a Blessing only to the Righteous.

But it will be said, tho' the Entertainment be the same, Guests may come to it with very different Appetites; so may the Sinner and the Saint to the good Things of this World; and this is enough to raise the Pleasure of the one much above that of the other. To this I answer: It is true, the Sinner's Passion for the World is more violent, his Fancy more gay and vain, and his Enjoyments more unmeasurable, loose and extravagant. But what follows from hence? As to *Passion*, it is the Torment, not Delight of the Mind. As to *Excess*, it is the Toil, not Pleasure of the Body. As to *Fancy*, it is too thin, too subtle and inconstant a Principle to lay any Strefs of human Happiness upon. There needs no study'd Proofs to convince Men that these things are thus.

1. As to *Excess*. The Mischiefs of it in the Use of worldly things are so manifest, that the *Epicurean* and *Atheist*, as often as they pretend to any Sense or Reason in the Conduct
of

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of Vice, decline it, and direct others to do so,
confessing it no less injurious to their present
Pleasure and sensual Happiness, than we think
it to Christianity, and our Pretensions to ano-
ther Life; and this they do upon good ground
certainly; for Excess clogs and dulls the
Fancy, satiates and blunts the Appetite, im-
pairs and enfeebles the Vigor of the Body.

2. As to Dotage on and Fondness for the
World, and the Things of it, it must needs
upon Trial end in Vexation and Disappoint-
ment; for he that promises himself more in
the World than there is in it, must unavoid-
ably find himself deluded and abused. And
the Truth is, were there much more solid
Excellence and lasting Pleasure in the Objects
of a Sinner than there is, it could never make
amends for the Trouble of so violent a Pas-
sion; this is so notoriously true, that when
Men would describe a Passion, such as that
of the Covetous, Ambitious, Lustful, Revenge-
ful, and the like, they do it by the Thirst of
Dropsey, by the Flames and Scorplings of a
Fever, and by the Restlessness of Storms and
Tempests; and when they would describe
the Anguish and Sorrow such feel under
Baffles and Misfortunes, they do it by Stabs,
and Wounds, and Death.

3. For

3. For *Fancy*. This, when it is purely such, that is, an Imagination which has no Reason to support it, is but a wandring Dream of an unexperienc'd Sinner, which, like Ghosts at the Appearance of Day, vanishes as soon as Sense and Reason break in upon it; however, we cannot deny but that one mistaken *Fancy* crouds upon another in the Sinner, like Dream upon Dream in the Deliriums of a Fever; and Experience itself doth seldom throughly awaken him out of this Infatuation. If this be any Advantage, we must leave the Sinner in possession of it, but cannot envy it him. I grant he has this Happiness, that his Judgment being overthrown, and his Imagination debauch'd, he suffers Cheat after Cheat, and is willing to do so; for if he comes to himself, he sees and feels that he is miserable. And yet it may be I have been too liberal in this Concession; for I cannot tell but that the greater Part of Sinners, after they have taken a long Surfeit of the World, may sin without *Fancy*, and without Gust, and may persist in a dull and tasteless Vice, not out of Appetite, but Custom; not because they find any Pleasure in it, but because being wholly carnal and worldly, they are utterly incapable of finding any in any thing else.

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It may be objected, secondly, that the Sinner has a wider Range for his Pleasures, that he eats of all the Trees of *Paradise*, without suffering any to be forbidden him, scorning those Restraints which Superstition lays on those we falsely call *wise* and *virtuous*. To this I answer: It is true, Religion does set Bounds to our Desires and Appetites, but they are such as our own Reason sets us too; such as describe and mark out to us the Path of Happiness, and teach us wherein the true Good, or, if you please, the natural Good of Man consists; he that cannot find his Satisfaction within these Bounds, will find it no where; if we once give our selves leave to pass these, we shall rove and ramble we know not whither. It is of these kind of Desires that *Solomon* says most truly, *All things are full of Labour, Man cannot utter it; the Eye is not satisfy'd with seeing, nor the Ear with hearing; Eccles. i. 8.* 2. Innumerable and insupportable are the Mischiefs which attend our invading forbidden Enjoyments; all exorbitant Lusts cost Men so dear, that we may boldly say, it would cost them less to conquer them than it does to gratify them; for who is able to reckon up the Troubles and Plagues with which carnal and spiritual Wickedness has embroil'd and embitter'd human Life? The Sinner,

Sinner, if he casts up his Accompts right, will have little reason to value himself upon that Liberty, or rather License he takes to pass the Bounds God has set Man. In a word, if we consider the State of the Sinner with respect either to his Prosecution of *Pleasure* or *Profit* in forbidden Instances, or with respect to the Violence of his Passion for both in Instances allow'd; or lastly, in respect to his Excess in the Use; or rather Abuse of the Things of the World, we shall find him harass'd by restless Desires and guilty Fears, worn out by the Drudgery and Toil of Lusts, fool'd and vex'd by the Emptiness and Disappointments of sensual Fancies, and oppress'd by a Croud of Mischiefs which pursue irregular and ungovern'd Enjoyments. How much a lovelier Picture does the virtuous Man make, whose Desires are moderate, his Satisfaction calm and lasting, his Enjoyments regular and innocent, and the whole Course of his Life free from guilty Fears, or any Evils brought upon himself? I will now in a word or two dispatch the second Consideration; that is,

2. What the Sinner loses by not becoming virtuous. As to the Point of *Profit*, it is plain that the Providence of God and the Nature of Things turn the Scale on the Side of Virtue; *Length of Days is in her Right-hand, and*

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in her Left-hand Riches and Honour, Prov. iii. 16. Godliness is profitable for all things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8. There are some Virtues necessary, not only to the Order and Beauty, but even to the Being and Safety of the World; I mean, both of publick Bodies and private Persons; such are, Truth, Justice, Faithfulness, Diligence and Industry, Sobriety and Temperance; without these Men cannot be qualify'd to discharge the Duties of any Station or Relation; without these Men cannot trade or deal one with another; nor can any Confidences or Friendships be enter'd into or maintain'd. But I believe this Point will not be contested, whether Truth or Falshood, Justice or Fraud and Oppression, Diligence or Sloth, Virtue or Debauchery, be the likeliest way to grow rich or great. I am sure we see many every Day undone by their Vices, who would have thrived and flourish'd by these Virtues. But if the Success of some impious Wretches should tempt us to dispute whether Knavery and Villany be not the readier way to gain Estates, I am sure no Man can ever doubt which is the best way to preserve and improve them. How few are the Instances to be produc'd of any Nation or Family that ow'd its Ruin to its

Virtue? But how numerous the Instances of both who have sunk under the Weight of Falshood and Licentiousness?

Let us come next to *Pleasure*. Here I cannot but wonder, that they whose chiefest Pleasure consists in *Fancy*, can see none in *Faith*. Let the great Articles of the Gospel be true or false, if it be but granted, as it must, that all righteous and good Men do heartily believe them; this Belief, let the Sinner call it which he pleases, *Faith* or *Fancy*, will have a powerful Influence on the Pleasure of this present Life. Is there no *Pleasure* in believing that I and my Enjoyments are secur'd by Guards of Angels? that I march through this World of Snares and Misery under the Conduct of uncontrollable Omnipotence and unerring Wisdom? Is there no *Pleasure* in believing that I am the Child, the Favourite of God, who is the *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, the universal Monarch of Heaven and Earth? Is there no *Pleasure* in believing that whatever becomes of me here, I shall most certainly one Day enter into a State wherein perfect Nature shall be entertain'd with perfect Pleasure, Nature rescu'd from Mortality, Pleasure refin'd from all its Dregs and Mixtures? Besides this *Pleasure* of *Faith*, there is another *Pleasure* of *Virtue*, which the

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good Man feels and actually enjoys in this present State. Is there no *Pleasure* in being above the Temptation of a silly Lust, and above the Assaults of any base unmanly Fears? Is there no *Pleasure* in peaceful Reflections upon all things past, in a steady and rational Government of our selves, and in chearful Hopes and Prospect of the future? Do the Virtuous reap no *Pleasure* from the Love of all that know and converse with them, and the Veneration of all who do but at a distance behold their Character? These are *Pleasures* no Sensuality of the most fortunate Sinner can compensate; and these are *Pleasures* the Sinner is a Stranger to; for having abandon'd his Reason and his God, he has neither present Peace nor chearful Hopes; and as upon sober Reflection he feels nothing within but guilty Fears and uneasy Blushes, so he meets with nothing abroad from the World but Reproach and Shame. Thus you see the Sinner's Accompt stated, his Gains and Losses as to the *Pleasures* and *Profit* of this World balanc'd.

What think you now? Are the Advantages of Sin such that it is worth the while to be damn'd for them? Are the short *Pleasures* of a carnal, debauch'd *Fancy* worth the purchasing by everlasting Burnings? What talk I of
Pleasures?

Pleasures? Are the Torments of unreasonable Passions, the Toil and Nauseousness of Excesses, the Sottishness and Stupidity of dull, surfeited, insipid Habits, the Diseases and Contentions, the Noise and Tumult, the Shame and Beggary, which are the usual Consequences of a loose, disorderly, and wicked Life; are these such lovely, such charming Objects, that we should be fond of purchasing them by the Loss of a Heaven, and all those calm and solid Pleasures which are in this Life the Pledges and Foretastes of it? And yet this is the Sum total of this Matter, Reason and Experience conspiring with Scripture in the Description of a Sinner's Choice and Fortune; *For my People have committed two Evils; they have forsaken me, the Fountain of living Waters, and bew'd out to themselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water*, Jer. ii. 13. *The Wicked are like the troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt*, Isaiah lvii. 20. Having thus prov'd the Fruitlessness of Sin, I pass on to the second General.

II. The Shame of it; *whereof ye are now ashamed*.

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I will

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I will demonstrate this, *i. e.* that Sin is shameful,

1. To be so in Fact, from the common Sense and Practice of Mankind.

2. I will shew that this Opinion of the Shamefulness of Sin is well grounded, even in the Nature of Sin itself.

1. Then of the Sense of Mankind in this Matter. *Righteousness*, says Solomon, *exalteth a Nation; but Sin is a Reproach to any People*, Prov. xii. 37. Not to trouble you with Nations, the Foundation of whose Shame or Glory have ever been their Virtue or their Vice; read what Records you please of the Lives of particular Men, *Greek* or *Barbarian*, *Roman*, or other, and you'll find that Temperance, Abstinence, Justice, Clemency, some Virtues or other were the only Things that ever render'd any Man truly great and honourable; and that never any Man degenerated from these, but he declin'd as much in his Honour as his Virtue; for nothing could ever rescue Vice from the Contempt of all wise and good Men, nay, of all in general, but the most contemptible of Men, Slaves, Parasites, and

and Flatterers. I never find any Historian, even tho' a Pagan, at a loss about those Characters which constitute Honour and Reproach. A Painter may as soon draw a Glory of Smoke and Dirt, as an Historian derive the Honour of any Man from his Vice. What talk I of the learned Part of Mankind? Virtue is to the Soul what Beauty is to the Eye, there needs no Learning to discern its Charms. When *Germanicus* dy'd, whose plain but manly Character *Suetonius*, the most calm and impartial Author, seems to doat upon while he writes; when this *Germanicus* dy'd, the very *Parthians* and *Barbarians*, in Reverence to his Virtue, did for a time abstain both from their Arms and Pleasures; the People of *Rome* raz'd their Temples and overthrew their Altars, concluding it more reasonable to believe that there were no Gods, than that that Virtue which was so ador'd and belov'd upon Earth, should be neglected and forgot by Heaven. This Notion rooted in the Minds of Men, prepar'd an easy Reception for the Gospel of Christ; so that tho' it thwarted the Humour and Interest of the World and Flesh, yet being taken with the Beauty of its Precepts, and the Examples of its Profelytes, Men saw most manifest Reasons to change Heathenism, which taught them nothing but
Riot

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Riot and Uncleannefs, for Christianity, which prefs'd them to Purity and Righteoufnefs. Hence it is that the Devil himfelf, when he fet himfelf to fupprefs Christianity in its very Birth, could not think of any more effectual Method, than to afperfe it with the Infamy of Immorality; well knowing that the Reproachfulnefs of Vice was an Opinion fo riveted into human Nature, that the Immorality of any Doctrin would more fuccefsfully prevail with Men to reject it, than any Evidences of divine Authority to receive it; and that all Mankind would be more eafily induc'd to believe the Devil the Author of the greateft Miracle, than God the Patron of the leaft Impiety. So that ye fee it ever was the Opinion of Mankind that Virtue had something divine and great in it, Vice something poor and reproachful; and that it ftill is fo in despite of all Endeavours of profligate Men to the contrary, may moft eafily appear from thefe following Arguments. For,

1. Whence is it that the Sinner cannot endure to enter into any ferious Examination of his own State, nor pardon the Freedom of any Man that lays him open to himfelf? (for *Fools defpife Wisdom and Inftitution*, Prov. i. 7.) Is not this a plain Confeflion of the Deformity of Sin, fince it makes Man, who naturally

tally abounds in Self-love and Fondness, dislike himself, unless his Shame be conceal'd from him by Paints and Perfumes, by artificial Shades and false Lights, by gross Diffimulation and Flatteries, or wilful Incogitancy?

Whence is it, 2dly, that our Saviour has observ'd, that *every one that does evil hates the Light, neither comes he to the Light?* Joh. iii. 20. Whence is it that *Tamar* cries out, 2 Sam. xiii. 13. *And I, whither shall I cause my Shame to go?* Whence is it that all Men, who are not as desperate in their Fortunes as their Vices, are willing to conceal their Crimes from the World, and make a Shew of Virtue? Is not this to confess that Vice is too deform'd to endure the Test of Day-light? that how vicious soever the World be, it does condemn the Vices that it follows? And does not the Sinner himself, by thus concealing his Vice, and counterfeiting Virtue, condemn in publick what he acts in private? Doth he not acknowledge that he ought to be what he labours to appear, and that he ought to forbear those Practices that he is ashamed to own? Whence is it, lastly, that bad Men, when they cannot deny, do yet take much Pains to lessen and excuse their Crimes, charging them one while upon uncontrollable Destiny, another

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ther while upon pressing Necessity; now upon insuperable Temptation, anon upon insupportable Frailty; upon any thing rather than themselves? Why would they have their Vice thought their Weakness and Misfortune, not Choice, but that there is something in it that is a Disparagement to their Reason, and so full of Reproach they are asham'd to own it? From whence it proceeds, that when Men are arriv'd at that Height of Wickedness, that they can no longer endure the Restraints of Hypocrisy and Retirement, or the Checks and Awe of publick Modesty, they abandon the civiliz'd World, and herd only with those whose mutual Guilt creates a mutual Confidence, and shelters them from the Reproach of one another; in this Company alone they are bold and loud, and croak together like Frogs in Mud and Darkness, in their own Filth and Folly. It is true, there are some such Prodigies of Wickedness, who are so far from concealing their Sin, that they pride themselves in their Crimes, and glory in their Shame; Men who take more Pleasure in publishing their Sin, than ever they did in committing it; who are harden'd into the Impudence of those in the Prophet *Jeremiah*, c. vi. 15. *Were they asham'd when they had committed Abomination? Nay, they were not at all asham'd,*

asham'd, neither could they blush. But blessed be God, the World is not so degenerate yet, but that these ever were, and ever will be accounted Monsters, not Men; Apostates, not only from Faith and Revelation, but Reason and human Nature; so that these are no stronger Objections against the unanimous Sense of Mankind in this Matter, than *Bedlams* are against the Reason, or Hospitals against the Strength and Beauty of human Nature. You see then by this time the Sense of Mankind concerning the Shamefulness of Sin; and now that no Man may bear any in hand that this is but a vulgar Error, instill'd at first into the Multitude by Art and Cunning, cherish'd and supported afterwards by the superstitious Prejudices of fearful Minds, and the popular Harangues of Men, whose Trade and Interest it is to preach up Virtue, *i. e.* the *Clergy*; I will shew you, secondly, that this Opinion is founded on the very Nature of Sin. Three things, in the Opinion of Sinners themselves, constitute the very Being and Essence of Shame and Reproach, *Folly*, *Abjectness* or *Pusillanimity*, and *Baseness*. If I can therefore shew that these three are inseparable from Sin, and essential to it, I shall make good my Point.

First

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First then, Sin argues a silly, sottish Understanding. If Wisdom consists in the Choice of those Things which make most for our Good, and in the steady Prosecution of them, we shall easily see how far a wicked Man can pretend to it; for if we regard his Choice, he prefers Vice to Virtue, Sicknes to Health; he prefers Earth to Heaven, and Time to Eternity; that is, if the Pleasure of Sin were equal to that of Heaven, he prefers a Moment's Pleasure before an Age's. If we regard his Firmness and Constancy, we shall find him like the Waves of an unsettled Sea, driven to and fro by the quite contrary Winds of quite contrary Passions, resolving to-day, and breaking that Resolution to-morrow; to-day ranting against Lust, and to-morrow soothing and gratifying it; we shall always find him entangled in a Labyrinth of vain Desires and real Troubles. Is not he foolish who pursues daily what he must one Day bitterly repent of, or if he does not, must be for ever miserable? Is not he foolish, who thro' his own Default is in every thing unhappy? unhappy if he succeed, unhappy if he miscarry; for such are his Desires, that if he do succeed, he is further engag'd in a World of Sin, that is, of Misery; and yet such the Violence and Impatience of his Passion, that if
he

he miscarry he cannot sustain the Misfortune. If these Topicks should seem disputable, which I dare not fancy, then give me leave to ask; Is not he foolish, who having devoted himself to Pleasure, does yet break down its Guards and Fences, and undermine its Foundation? And yet this the Sinner is guilty of; for that Virtue which he deserts is the true Guard of human Pleasure, prescribing our Affections and Enjoyments those Bounds, which if we go beyond, we naturally fall into that Excess which is alike fatal to the Repose of our Minds, and the Health and Vigor of our Bodies. The Foundations of Pleasure are Power, Wealth, and Reputation; but who knows not that the Sinner is not more prodigal of any thing than his Wealth, unless his Reputation? and what impairs these destroys Power; for nothing that is poor and contemptible can be powerful; thus the Folly of the Sinner is notorious.

2. The second Ground or Cause of Shame is *Pusillanimity*, or a *Meanness* and *Abjectness* of Spirit. There are three things which constitute a Man truly great. 1. Acting consonant to his Birth and Station. 2. An even, suitable and manly Temper in either Fortune. 3. A modest, humble, but resolv'd Courage.

But

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But alas! how far is he from acting consonant to his Birth and Station, who being immortal in his Soul, and having a Body design'd for a Resurrection, does yet confine all his Desires to this side the Grave, and doats on Pleasures, which only sojourn with us for a Day? who being born with a Capacity of Communion with God, and of the Joys of Angels, does yet give himself up to an unmanly, degenerate Conversation? He who being born Man, that is, a wise and rational Creature, is yet wholly taken up with the little Trappings, the imaginary Ornaments, and the more imaginary Pleasures of a short Life? How much greater he whose diviner Soul is satisfy'd with nothing but pure, rational, lasting and substantial Pleasures; whose Desires stoop not below a Heaven, and whose Hopes are bounded by nothing but Eternity?

Does he, *2dly*, behave himself evenly and manly in every Fortune, whose Prosperity is insolent and insupportable, and his Adversity dejected and contemptible? And yet that generally is the Case of a Sinner, whose Happiness depends upon the Humour of Man, the Smiles of Fortune, or something as blind and capricious as the Heathens thought that to be. How much greater he whose Pleasures being from above, and his Peace depending only on
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the Conscience of a virtuous Life, is too great to think himself a great Sufferer or Gainer in the Ebbs or Flows of worldly Fortune or worldly Reputation; and therefore is calm and serene, smooth and even; that is, he is himself in each Condition?

Lastly, It is the Prerogative of the good Man alone to be modestly assur'd, to be humbly courageous; for such a one having no Guilt, must have no Fears neither as to another World; and having no base Lust, no baser Interest to gratify, can have none for this neither; for what can he fear who has nothing to obtain or lose which he extremely values? On the other hand, the vicious Man has Thousands of Desires and Hopes in this Life, and therefore must have as many Thousand Fears; and he has no Hopes at all for another Life, and therefore has nothing left him but Fear in respect of that.

3. The last Ingredient of Shame is *Baseness*; by which I mean a Temper compounded of Ingratitude and Falshood, Perfidiousness, Levity, and Selfishness: And this the Sinner is guilty of to the height; no Benefits can tie him, no Ties can hold him; ungrateful, false, unjust, perfidious, devoted only to his own Will or Humour; that is, to some vile, base

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Lust; to this he is ready at any time to sacrifice the Honour of God, the Prosperity of his Country, and the Safety of his Soul; for his Sin is a downright Act of Treason and Hostility against each: What can be more ungrateful than he who *turns the Grace of God into Wantonness*, his Mercy into Presumption, his temporal Favours and Blessings into Luxury and Riot; that is, into Affronts, and Contempt of his great Benefactor? What can be more inconstant than he who is not true to his own Reason? who cheats, imposes on, and plays the Hypocrite with himself? What can be more false than he who spurns under his Feet at every Turn the most sacred Vows and Covenants, and the most solemn Promises; I mean, those of Baptism, our Christian Profession, and the voluntary Engagements which almost every Sinner has one time or other enter'd into, under the Conviction of Conscience, and the Distress of some Dangers and Difficulties? What can be more unjust than to invade the Rights of God and Man, and subvert all the fundamental Laws of human Society, Justice, Charity, Faith, Gratitude, and the like? And yet this is the Guilt the Sinner daily involves his Soul in. Add to all this now, that Man is oblig'd to Virtue by all the Ties that the Love, the

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Bounty, the Mercy, and the Goodness, the Long-suffering and Patience of a great God can lay upon him, by the Condescensions and Sufferings of Jesus, by the Impressions, Solicitations and Importunities of the Spirit; in a word, by all the Ties of Grace or Nature, or civil Compacts and Institutions can lay upon him, and that he breaks thro' and spurns under Foot all these for the sake of a vile Lust, and that upon Inducements or Temptations never necessary, always shameful, and generally slight and trifling; and then tell me whether any thing can be more scandalously base than this false and ungrateful, this inconstant, unjust and perfidious Creature? Good God! What is become of the Modesty, what of the Sense of Mankind, that such a thing as this should yet pretend to Honour, or this Pretension be allow'd by any? Ah! surely these are Characters that most deservedly render the Sinner, while he persists obstinately to be such, the Pity or the Scorn of Man, and the Hate of God; and therefore if he dies impenitent, it is no Wonder if God persecute him with everlasting Wrath and Vengeance. Which puts me in mind of,

3dly, The only Fruit that I know of which can be reap'd of Sin is Death, eternal Death; *the End of those things is Death.* O Death,

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said the wise Man, *Eccles. xxi. 1. how bitter is the remembrance of thee to one who lives at Rest in his Possessions, unto the Man that has nothing to vex him, and that has Prosperity in all things?* If he said this of temporal Death, how much more conclusively may I of an eternal one? O Death! how much more bitter will you prove to that soft, sensual Sinner, who must change all his Pleasures for eternal Pains, whose gay Fancies must all vanish into Smoke and Horror of eternal Night? This is an Argument against Sin which nothing can baffle but Infidelity; and yet it is as certain that there is a Judgment to come, as it is that there is such a thing as the Christian Religion in the World, for the one depends upon the other; for had not a Judgment to come been establish'd upon unanswerable Proofs, it was impossible that Christianity should have prevail'd in the World, considering the Instruments by which it was propagated, and the Opposition it was encounter'd with.

But you will say, If there be a Hell, can nothing less than exquisite and everlasting Torments serve the Turn? I answer: The Interest of Religion never requir'd, nor did the Holy Ghost in Scripture ever design that we should have a particular and exact Ac-

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count of the vast Variety of Cases which will fall within the Compass of future Happiness and Misery, but only such a general Representation of a Heaven and a Hell, as might render them most effectually serviceable to promote Holiness; and there are many Reasons, which I have not now Time to mention, why God hath thought fit to set before us both our Duty, and the Motives to it, in Perfection, without descending to the various Degrees of the one or the other. Having said this, I will go on, not throughly to canvass this Matter, but only to offer some few Thoughts upon it, which seem to me most natural and obvious.

That the Pains of Hell are intense and intolerable, cannot methinks be controverted by any who embrace Revelation; *Fire and Brimstone*, and *the Worm that never dies*, whether taken figuratively or literally, are incapable of any other Interpretation than what must give us a very terrible Idea of Hell Pains, the Punishments therefore of that Place, as in *Rev. xii.* call'd *Torments*; and *Rom. ii.* *Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish*. As to the *Duration* of these Pains, it is a Point which not only ill Men have been unwilling to believe, but some good Men have stumbled at; yet whoever will read the Scriptures im-

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partially,

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partially, will find it hard to deny, but that
if God had design'd to have prevented all
Mistakes about this Matter, it is not easy to
imagine how the Eternity of Hell Pains could
have been more plainly or expressly asserted;
The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Pu-
nishment, and the Righteous into Life eternal,
Matth. xxv. *The Smoke of their Torment af-*
cendeth up for ever and ever, Rev. xii.

But must we not be forc'd, will some say,
to put such a Sense upon these and the like
Scriptures as does not import an Impossibili-
ty, nor imply a Contradiction to the Justice
of God? As to *Impossibility*, all that is said to
this Purpose is, I think, but idle Talk; when
we are able to fathom Omnipotence, and re-
solve what it can, and what it cannot do; and
when we can tell how far God will exert his
Omnipotence in that Day of his Power and
Glory, you may be able to determine whether
an Eternity of Pains be possible or not. If we
can be assur'd that God will keep to the same
Laws of Nature in that other World which
he has establish'd in this, I mean Laws of cor-
poreal, mechanical Nature; if we can fully
comprehend the Properties of Hell Fire, the
Condition of those Bodies in which the
Damned shall subsist, and all other Circum-
stances of that miserable State, then may we
be

be able to pronounce rationally of the Possibility or Impossibility of this Article, otherwise we do but oppose wild and precarious Guesses against the Letter and Design of Revelation. As to the Reconcilableness of this Opinion with the Justice of God, the main Difficulty lies in this, that there seems to be no Proportion between eternal Punishment and the Pleasure and Profit of Sin, which is but for a Moment.

But I beseech you to consider, 1. Whether an everlasting Hell be not the natural Issue of Sin? Whether Sinners, as they do by degrees degenerate into Devils, do not also unavoidably plunge themselves into a State of everlasting Misery? When God resolves to endure them no longer, and therefore shuts them out of his Kingdom, whither shall they go? Or where shall they abide? They will be involv'd in those Flames which will consume the visible Heaven and Earth, after Christ and his Saints have ascended up triumphantly out of them; and being immortal and incorruptible, what shall they do? That Fire that consumes all Things else, will not consume them; into the new Heavens and the new Earth they cannot force their way. The *Epicurean* may try if he can to create himself a new World out of the Rubbish, the Cynders

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and Atoms of the old; the corpuscular Atheist
may try whether he can create Light out of
Darkness, Order and Beauty out of Confu-
sion; whether he can so bind or temper that
tormenting Fire, as to render it pleasant as the
Sun-beams, or beautiful as the Flame that
sparkles in the Diamonds and various pre-
cious Stones; I doubt not but, were there
no other, the Fruitlessnes of such an Attempt
will then abundantly convince them that
Creation is a sufficient Proof of a God. In
short, if Sin excludes Devils and Men from
the Presence of God, and banishes them out
of that World which God creates; and if
this Exclusion or Banishment does imply an
everlasting Hell, I see not how this can re-
flect upon the Justice of God, any more than
it does upon a Church or State to excommu-
nicate or banish such Members as have ren-
der'd themselves unworthy and unfit to con-
tinue in either.

Consider, *2dly*, That the Justice of God is
not to be estimated by any Proportion be-
tween the Pleasure or Profit of Sin, and the
Sharpness or Duration of its Punishment; for
where the Motives of Sin are less, the Guilt
is the greater; but the Malignity of Sin and
the Incurribleness of the Sinner is the main
thing to be consider'd, when we would judge
of

of the Reasonableness of Punishment. I demand then, are you able to determine exactly how deeply Sin has taken root? how thoroughly it has infected the whole Mass of Nature? when it is or is not curable? how long the Sinner is capable of Mercy? and when it is that infinite Wisdom can endure him no longer, but finds itself oblig'd to cut him off? Can you comprehend the Majesty of God? If not, how can you determine to a Grain or Scruple the Weight of that Guilt which the Sinner contracts by his Affronts and Rebelions against him? Are you able to set a Rate upon the Sufferings of the Son of God and the Graces of the Spirit? If not, how can you estimate the Demerit of those Sins which condemn the one, resist, grieve, and quench the other?

3. Lastly, Let the Eternity of a Hell look as severe as it will, you must remember that it is the Sinner's Choice. I know you will here tell us very tragical Stories of the Corruption of Nature and Temptations of the World, by which you would have it believ'd you are sway'd, bias'd and over-power'd into Sin, and would consequently insinuate that Hell is the Sinner's Destiny, and not his Fault; and so the whole Blame would be cast upon the Contrivance of God. I have a full, tho'
short

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short Answer to this, with Reverence be it spoke: What could the infinite Wisdom, the infinite Power and Goodness of God do more to rescue a Sinner than it has done? What could he do more than give his Son to die for us, and his Spirit to sanctify us? What nobler Motive could he use than a Hell to deter us from Sin, and a Heaven to encourage us to Virtue? What easier Terms of Life could he propose than Sincerity instead of Perfection, and Sorrow instead of Atonement? How could he stretch the Arms of Mercy wider, than by declaring that nothing could be able to provoke him to damn us, but wilful Negligence or obstinate Wickedness? And lastly, What could he do more than bear so long with us, till we begin to rally and ridicule his Patience, and make his Mercy and Long-suffering an Argument against his Justice and Sanctity, nay, against his very Being? If you please now to recollect the whole Discourse, it will amount to thus much: If there be no Fruit in Sin, or none equivalent to what we forfeit by it, without any additional Consideration, it is a wretched Folly, and no Man can, without the highest Disparagement to his Sense and Reason, take any Pains, run any Hazard for it. I would to God I could gain this Point to-day, that no Man would henceforward

forward pursue any Sin which did not reward him with substantial Pleasure; then I am sure that those sower and mischievous Sins of the Spirit, Pride, Revenge, Sedition, Faction, would gain no Profelytes, would find no Patrons; for I can as soon believe Demoniacks happy, as Men possess'd by such an evil and tormenting Spirit; then I am sure, that tho' veteran Sinners may continue such, they would not be able to make many Converts; for the first Essays of Sin are still accompany'd with uneasy, frightful Apprehensions and keen Reproaches; nay, all who have any thing of Conscience left would renounce their Vice; for while they gratify the Body, they crucify the Soul; and the Pains of one outweigh the Pleasures of the other.

But, 2dly, If Sin be not only a *fruitless*, but a *shameful Work* too, then no Man pretending to Sense or Honour can own it any longer. I would to God I could gain this Point to-day, I should then have wrested out of the Hands of Sin one of the keenest of its Weapons, one of its most common, as well as most fatal Temptations; for no Man would henceforward think himself bound to be ungrateful to his God out of Respect or Compliment to Man; no Man would think that so black a Guilt as that of Perjury and
Falshood,

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Falshood, which cleaves to all our Sins, could
be protected or excus'd by the Fashions or
Gallantry of this Age. But,

3dly, Beyond all this: If *Death, eternal*
Death, be the Wages of Sin, then tho' no Shame
should attend it, tho' the Pleasures of Sin were
as rich as the Fancy, and ravishing as the Do-
tage of the most ingenious as well as most sen-
sual Sinner, no Man in his Wits can think it
worth his while to be damn'd for it, or that
it can make amends for the Loss of a Hea-
ven.

I know after all, in how clear a Light fo-
ever I may put these things, as I think I have,
it will be a very hard Matter for the invete-
rate Sinner to receive them; it will be a very
hard Matter for him thus to persuade him-
self of the Deformity of Sin, and the Justice
of its Punishment. But whatever Thoughts
Atheists and Infidels, and all that have been
long harden'd in Wickedness, may have of
Sin, methinks every one that believes the Go-
spel, and has any Spark of natural Conscience
in him, cannot but see, after what I have said,
an inexpressible Loathsomeness and Horror in
it; such a one cannot but see that it is a flat
Contradiction to the Gospel, to his Profession,
and to his Hopes; and that therefore he must
be oblig'd to renounce his Sin, if he will retain
his

his Faith; for such a one, tho' he should be able to sin with so much Caution and Discretion as to suffer no Mischief by it, which it is hard to imagine; nay, tho' he should be able to sin with so much Dexterity, as to be able to reap much Fruit, much Pleasure or Profit from his Sins, yet he must believe all the while that he must one Day pay dear for them; for *what is a Man profited if he gain the whole World and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?* Ah! were this Point gain'd; would such as profess to believe the Gospel heartily and thoroughly renounce every evil way, how glorious would be the Face of Religion! Then indeed the Kingdom of Heaven would be in all of us *Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* Ah! then how happily should we live! and how comfortably should we die! And as we should be transform'd daily from Glory to Glory, so should we finally be translated from the Joys of this World to the Beatitudes of another. *To which God of his Mercy bring us: To whom be Glory for ever and ever.* Amen.



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S E R M O N XII.

Christian Circumspection.

E P H. V. 15, 16.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as wise; redeeming the Time, because the Days are evil.

THEY are but few, I believe, who perish thro' Infidelity; but many, ah! too too many are undone and lost by a lukewarm and imperfect Compliance with Religion, and a *Form of Godliness, without the Power thereof*. Such is the Weight and Moment of Christianity, that it is not easily to be contemn'd; such its Evidence and Authority, that it is not easily to be out-fac'd and born down. This kind of Attempt therefore succeeding with few, Man generally betakes himself to other Arts; and since Religion is too hard for our Reason, tho' not for our Lust, he resolves to deceive that Conscience which he cannot baffle, and to practise such a Conformity to its Precepts, as if it do not entirely

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entirely satisfy Conscience, may at least take off the Edge of its Persecution, and procure a false and deceitful Peace.

But would these Men consider things impartially, they would soon see that Murder and Adultery, Fraud and Falshood, are not more contrary to the Precepts, than this kind of Behaviour is to the Exhortations of the Gospel; they would soon see that the being *almost a Christian* can at best but bring them almost to Heaven; and that it is utterly repugnant to common Sense to bestow least Time upon that which should be the great Business of Life, and be most remiss and negligent about that which is confessedly of the highest Importance.

To promote which Persuasion, and rouse and awaken such as thus perniciously impose upon themselves, is my Design in pitching upon these Words. I know they are interpreted by some with a particular View to Times of Persecution; as if the Apostle's Meaning were, Do not, like Fools, precipitate yourselves into Dangers; but, as becomes wise Men in difficult and trying Times, make use of due Caution and Prudence to decline the Troubles which you will otherwise fall into. But I shall consider the Words in a general Sense, as not only more easy and obvious, and
more

more useful and applicable at present; but because I find them in this Chapter, in the Company of a great many other Exhortations, without any thing that I can see to limit or restrain them to particular Times. I shall from them discourse of three things.

I. The Duty to which the Text exhorts us, *See that ye walk circumspectly, redeeming the Time.*

II. The Motives by which it is enforc'd, which are two.

1. This is our Wisdom; *not as Fools, but as wise.*

2. The Nature of the Times requires it; *because the Days are evil.*

III. I will lay before you some Directions for the better enabling you to practise this Duty.

I. Of the Duty in my Text. I am here to shew you, 1. What it is *to walk circumspectly.*

2. What it is *to redeem the Time.*

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Circumspectly in the Original is ἀκριβῶς; and this Word, which occurs several times elsewhere in the *New Testament*, is variously render'd; but I think it every where signifies one of these three things: Either,

1. *Exactly, accurately, perfectly*; as in 1 Thess. v. 2. *You your selves know perfectly, ἀκριβῶς οἰδατε, that the Day of the Lord so cometh as a Thief in the Night.* Thus, Luke i. 3. *Having had perfect understanding of things from the very first, παρῃκολεθνηκοτι ἀνωθεν πάντων ἀκριβῶς.* In this Sense St. Paul uses the Word ἀκριβέστατον, when he calls the Sect of the Pharisees, τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν, *the strictest Sect*, Acts xxvi. 5. that is, a Sect which in the general Esteem of the *Jews* was most nicely and exactly conformable to the Laws and Traditions of the Elders.

2. *Ἀκριβῶς* sometimes signifies *earnestly, industriously, zealously*. Thus, Acts xviii. 25. it is said of *Apollos*, that he *spoke and taught diligently, ἀκριβῶς, the things of the Lord.* That by *diligently* we are here to understand *zealously and industriously*, not *exactly or perfectly*, is plain from two things. 1. The Qualifications of *Apollos*, he was but a *Novice* or *Catechumen* himself; for so we should render these Words, ἕως ἡμετέρας χατηχημένος ἢ ἔδον τὴν κηρίαν; which we turn, *this Man was instructed*

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ed in the Way of the Lord, not very properly; he knew only the Baptism of *John*, and needed to be more fully instructed by *Aquila* and *Priscilla*. 2. *St. Luke* attributes this his Preaching to his Zeal and Fervency, *This Man being instructed in the Way of the Lord*, and being fervent in Spirit, *he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord*.

3. Lastly, *Ἀνελεῖς* sometimes signifies *carefully, diligently, circumspectly, cautiously*; as in *Matth. ii. 8. Enquire diligently*; and in my Text, *Walk circumspectly*. It was impossible for Interpreters to give us here all the Senses of the Word, and therefore they made use of that which did best, as they conceiv'd, fit the Place; tho' had they been to comment on the Text, as I am now, I do not doubt but they would have told us, that the Word here is to be taken in its utmost Latitude and Extent; so that *to walk circumspectly*, is to walk wisely and thoughtfully, strictly and correctly, vigilantly and carefully, industriously and zealously. Nor is the Duty of Circumspection in my Text opposite only to Confidence and Security, but to Remissness and Drowsiness, to Lukewarmness and Lifelessness. *To walk circumspectly*, is to act in reference to Religion and our eternal Interest, as Commanders would do in a State of War, and in an

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Enemy's Country; or Pilots in a rocky or deceitful Sea; or wise Ministers of State in Affairs of a doubtful Nature, and of the highest Consequence. This Exhortation then, *See that ye walk circumspectly*, does in general amount to the same with those others which we meet with up and down in the New Testament: *What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch*, Mark xiii. ult. *Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteousness thereof*, Matth. vi. 33. *Be sober, be vigilant, for your Adversary the Devil goes about as a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. *Give all diligence to make your Calling and Election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. *Work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. *Watch ye, stand fast, quit ye like Men, be strong*, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. *If you call upon the Father, who without respect of Persons judgeth every Man according to his Works, pass the Time of your sojourning here in Fear*, 1 Pet. i. 17. I will add no more Instances of this kind, this is enough to give you a full and clear Notion of the Sense of these Words in general, *See that ye walk circumspectly*. But he that consults the Interest of Souls, must never content himself in generals, when there is room for more close and particular Application of Truth. I am here further therefore to put
you

you in mind, that our Christian Diligence must exert and employ itself in these three things. 1. In examining our Principles. 2. In trying and regulating our Manners. And, 3. In securing and fortifying ourselves against Temptations.

1. In examining our Principles. It ought to be the first Care of a Christian to be thoroughly inform'd of the Truth, Importance, and Strength of his Principles. He is little vers'd in Christianity, who does not understand that Illumination must precede Mortification and Purity, and that spiritual Wisdom and Understanding is the only solid Foundation of true Righteousness and Holiness; and he must be as little vers'd in human Nature, who does not know that the Understanding is the governing and commanding Faculty in Man; that it is uneasy and troublesome to act against the Dictates of ones own Mind; that tho' a good Principle does not always prevail and produce Virtue, yet ill ones will ever be sufficient to excuse and embolden us in Vice; and that the best of Principles, if they be not well rooted, will generally prove useless and unfruitful. Finally, he must be a Stranger to Mankind, who does not know that they are often apt to neglect the great Duties of the Gospel, and to

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place Religion in superstitious Trifles or Fancies; who does not know that several seeming Virtues grow from very false and foolish Principles; as Industry from Ambition; Temperance, Continence and Frugality from Avarice, and the like; and that on the other hand, Men are often betray'd and misled into great Vices and Sins, and continue confidently in them, nay, value themselves upon them, for want of a diligent and impartial Examination of their Principles; as is evident in the Case of Superstition, Schism, Faction, and the like.

The next thing our Diligence is to be conversant about, is our Morals. If we will be Christians in good earnest, we must often be trying our Hearts and reflecting on our Ways; we must often examine what is our great End and Design, and with what Vigor and Constancy we pursue it; we must compare our Lives with the Gospel, and with the Example of those Saints and excellent Christians who thro' Faith and Patience inherit the Promises; we must see that our Obedience be neither partial nor superficial, lazy nor unsteady; in a word, we must continually be reforming our Defects, improving our Virtues, and strengthening our Resolutions, and compleating our Conquests over the World
and

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and the Body, by Acts of Faith and Vigilance, Self-denial and Charity; *herein must we daily exercise our selves, to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Man.*

Lastly, Because he that stands must take heed lest he fall; because this Life is a State of Trial and Probation; therefore we must use our utmost Diligence to avoid or defeat Temptations; we must be thoroughly acquainted with our own Weakness and the Strength of our Enemy; we must consider well from whence Temptations arise; by what Art or what Importunity, by what Force or what Fraud they supplant or master us; and on the other side, with what Arms they are most successfully encounter'd, and by what Means we are wont to acquire fresh Strength and Vigor, that by this means we may *so run as to obtain.* And thus have I accounted for the first Branch of the Duty in my Text, *the walking circumspectly.*

I come now next to shew you what is meant by *redeeming the Time.* This is but a further Improvement of that Diligence which I have been describing; or, if you please, it is a peculiar and eminent Instance of it; for *redeeming the Time* must signify one of these two things. 1. If it relate to such as have been great Sinners, it must import, that it is

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their Duty, as much as in them lies, to retrieve by Vigilance, and Industry, and Zeal hereafter, that Time which they had formerly mis-spent and wasted on Sin and Folly; this is what new Converts to a Sect do ever practise; and surely it will better become the Converts of Virtue: For how reasonable is it that an unfeigned Penitent should give God, the World and himself, the best Proofs he can of his Integrity? the most undoubted Testimonies he can of his Detestation for Sin, and Love of Holiness? of his Sorrow for having offended God, and his Zeal to please him? A truly humble and contrite Spirit will ever be circumspect, and fervent too. Thus our Lord observes to *Simon* the Pharisee, from the Example of a Woman that was a Sinner, *Luke vii. 37.* that the Zeal of a Penitent ought to bear some Proportion to the Offences of his past Life; and that he, to whom *much is forgiven*, ought to *love much*. *St. Paul* furnishes us with another Instance of this Truth in that lively Description he makes us of the Repentance of the *Corinthians*. *2 Cor. vii. 11.* *For behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what Carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of your selves; yea, what Indignation; yea, what Fear; yea, what vehement Desire; yea, what Zeal; yea, what Re-*
venge!

venge! This, this is the natural Influence of that Shame and Sorrow, that Love and Gratitude, and those other Passions which fill the enlighten'd and penitent Soul.

2. To *redeem the Time*, may signify to purchase Opportunity and Leisure to serve God and cultivate our Virtue, even at the Expence either of Profit or Pleasure; to retrench from our Acquaintance and Friendships in the World, from Business and Diversion, and whatever else, that we may have the more Time to consecrate to Religion; it is to be content to be a little the less popular and pleasing, that we may be the more pious; to be a little less wealthy, that we may be the more rich in Virtue and good Works; to be a little less indulgent and complaisant to ourselves, that we may enjoy the more pure, the more transcending and lasting Pleasure; for this is plainly the Case.

But you will say, Business cannot be dispens'd with; nor can it be my *Fault*, when it is my *Duty* to be industrious in my Station.

To this I answer: Necessity, if it be that which God creates, not Lust or Fancy, must be comply'd with: God will require no more than he gives; small Portions of Time in Devotion or Meditation will be accepted
from

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from those who with much Labour and Difficulty provide a modest Competency for themselves and Families; for such to bear the Evils and Hardships of Life with Humility and Resignation, will be all the Mortification exacted; and their Toil and Travail in their Station, in Obedience to the Will of God, and in Dependance upon him, will be interpreted as Works of Faith: But for others, who aim not at a Competency, but Wealth; who are incumber'd, not for the Necessaries, but Port and State of Life, the Case is otherwise; for I must assure such, that the Cares of the World, as well as the Lusts of the Flesh, do choak the Word, and render it unfruitful. Whenever Business quenches the Spirit, and alienates the Mind from God; whenever Employments do so take up our Time that we have none for Religion, or so engage our Hearts that we have no Gust, no Relish of spiritual Things, we are then industrious only to undo our selves for ever; our Business then becomes fatal to us, and we can no longer pretend to be Disciples and Followers of Jesus here, or hope to reign with him hereafter. But if we direct all to the Glory of God; if we begin our Business in Faith, and end it in Praise and Gratitude; if our Alms and good Works increase in Proportion to
our

our Success; if our Application to the Duties of our Station do not diminish, but augment our Love of God, our Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, and our Desire of Heaven; then go on and prosper, be as industrious and as rich as you will, I pretend not to set any stricter Bounds either to the one or to the other. I have dispatch'd the first thing in my Text, the *Duty*; and now proceed to the

II. The *Motives* to it. These are two. I will begin with the first of them; that this is true Wisdom *to walk circumspectly*, and *to redeem the Time*; but the contrary direct Folly; *not as Fools, but as wise*. To live at random and *extempore*, thoughtlessly or remissly, is certainly inconsistent with true Wisdom; for it is as if there were neither Right nor Wrong, Good nor Evil; as if all Things were indifferent, and it were the same thing whether we follow'd Reason, or abandon'd our selves to Humour and Fancy, Chance and Passion. If this be so, why was Reason given us? To deny the Difference between Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, is plainly to leave no Use for Reason, and to destroy all Distinction between Wisdom and Folly. But if this be the highest Absurdity, then it is plain we ought to act cautiously and carefully, to chuse prudently

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dently the best End, and to pursue it diligently. And certainly if there be essential and immutable Good, it is to be preferr'd before that which is accidental and mutable; if there be eternal Good, it is to be preferr'd before that which is temporal and short; and truly, if there be not, I cannot see why this degree of Reason was communicated to us; can it ever be that this *Candle of the Lord*, as *Solomon* calls it, was lighted up in us to make us extravagant in our Fancies, ingenious in exciting and executing our Lusts and Passions? to fit us to get Wealth by mean and vile Arts, and then spend it in Luxury? to cheat and overreach one another in Peace, and destroy one another in War? This can never be; for if this be all the Use of Reason, it were better we never had it. But if our Reason were design'd, by the Help of God, to make us wise and good, to make us holy and happy, this very thing supposes and implies a *Life to come*, since nothing less can be a solid Foundation of Virtue, nor can Happiness have any Subsistence or Being without it. But you need no such Arguments as these, you are not in the Darknes of Paganism, but in the Light of Christianity; you know perfectly that there is a God, that he is *Light*, and in him is no Darknes at all; that the Gospel is the Re-

velation

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velation of his Will; that there is a Judgment to come, a Heaven and a Hell; and therefore it is easy to convince you what it is to be wise. For if there be a God, it must be our Wisdom to do the things that please him; if there be a Judgment to come, this must be our great Concern to prepare for it; if there be a Heaven, no Diligence can be too much to secure it; if a Hell, no Caution, no Circumspection too much to escape it. If you believe the Gospel to be the Word of God, you can never account him wise who is very solicitous about temporal things, but careless of eternal; who cherishes and adorns the Body, but neglects the Soul; who fears the Censure or Displeasure of Man, and flights the Judgment of God; who makes mighty Provision for Life, but none for Death; who, in a word, is cautious and circumspect, vigilant and industrious in every thing but what relates to Wisdom, true Happiness, and a blessed Eternity. It is true, the Vogue of the World runs ever in favour of its own Creatures and Votaries; but you are to form your Judgment by that of God; the World praises those that do well for themselves, that is, see and secure their worldly Interest; but *the righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, and his Eyes behold the thing that is just.* The World counts the Proud happy,

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happy, and blest the Covetous, but the Lord abhors him; the World flatters and admires the Great, the Rich, the Splendid; but alas! it is too too often that what is highly esteem'd amongst Men, is *Abomination in the Sight of God*, Luke xvi. 15. But if thou art apt to be deceiv'd by the outward Appearance of Things, look upon one of these poor Creatures whom the World counts great, or wise, or happy, when Calamity has overtaken him, when he is stript of his borrow'd Plumes, and appears in his own naked Essence, and thou wouldst soon acknowledge that nothing is more contemptible or more miserable.

But it will be said, you are proving that it is wise to be religious; when the thing you propos'd to prove was, that it is wise to walk circumspectly, and to redeem the Time.

I grant it; but if I have prov'd the one, I have at the same time abundantly made good the other. Without Circumspection we cannot shun or conquer Temptations; without Diligence and Industry we cannot master our Lusts and Passions, nor improve and grow in Virtue; without the Diligence in my Text we can never attain to the Peace or Pleasure of true Holiness; we can never be steady or unmoveable in the Ways of God, nor have any clear Proof of our own Integrity; in a word,

word, no Man can *so run as to obtain the Prize*, unless he run with Care and Vigor ; no Man can enter into Life but thro' *the narrow Way* and *strait Gate* ; all which amounts in effect to this, that no Man can be truly religious, or thoroughly a Christian, unless he *walk circumspectly, and redeem the Time*.

2. The second Argument by which St. Paul recommends the Duty in my Text, is taken from the Nature of the Times ; *because the Days are evil* : That is, when Wickedness abounds, when it grows epidemical and impudent, the Servants of God lie under the greater Obligation to Circumspection and Diligence ; the reason is very evident, because they have then two things to fear more than ever ; the Contagion of Sin, and the Judgments of God. The Nationalness of Sin is so far from furnishing particular Persons with an Excuse or Apology for Wickedness, that it threatens Ruin and Destruction to all ; and if we would not be involv'd in the Punishment of the Wicked, we must take care not only not to partake with them in their Guilt, but also to keep our selves at the utmost distance from it ; not only not to afford the least Countenance to modish, fashionable Sins, but to oppose them with a hearty and discreet

I Zeal,

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Zeal, and practise the contrary Virtues with more Warmth and Resolution, if it may be, than at any time else. What Care? what Industry? what Prayer does it require to do this in such Times? Sin does at no time want its Attraction and Allurements; Sin is always apt to taint and infect, how much more when general Example gives Authority to it? when it is attended with Applause and Reputation? And such only are thought Men of Sense and Education, as fall in handsomely with the Vices of the Times. How apt in such a Case is the Commonness of a Sin to abate at least much of our Horror for it? How natural is it for frail Man to yield to the Influence of his Friends and Acquaintance? How easy is Compliance, at least a great way, when Custom, Good-nature, and worldly Prudence, persuade and invite to it? And how hard a Task is it to mortify our Appetites for Profit and Pleasure, when in the Eye of the World the Enjoyment of both is not only lawful, but commendable too; and when consequently we are not only to combat our own Inclinations, but fall under the Contempt of our Friends and Acquaintance for doing so? But this Difficulty ought only to excite the Courage and increase the Caution of a Child of God; for he is to look upon this Day as the

Day

Day of his Trial; now it is that he is to shew how firmly he believes the Gospel, and how much he prefers an *incorruptible Crown* before all worldly and carnal Considerations; now it is that he ought to make appear what Zeal he has for God, and what Charity for Man; how passionately he desires the Glory of the one, and the Salvation of the other. Nor let any Christian object here, Alas! what can my single Example or particular Endeavours contribute to stem the Tide of prevailing Wickedness? Leave that to God; the doing thy Duty is what belongs to thee, the Success of it is what belongs to him; he can do what he will, and will do what is best; he has often wrought temporal Deliverance, not by Numbers and Strength, but by a peculiar, and to us inconceivable Energy and Influence; and why may he not effect spiritual Deliverance by Means or Instruments, as far as appears to us inconsiderable, but when back'd by his Blessing and Direction, mighty and victorious? But whatever becomes of this, thou wilt deliver thy own Soul; and this, if thou be in reality a Christian, thou canst not but judge a sufficient Recompence of whatever thou canst do or suffer.

Let no one, secondly, be afraid to be charged with Singularity; the more singular thy

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Virtue, the more eminent will be thy Reward: *They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the Day that I make up my Jewels.* Nor can any Man be a sincere Christian, who does not prefer the Praise of God in the Day of Judgment, before the Censures and Reproaches of a vicious and infatuated World in this Day of Darkness and Temptations. If ever this Argument were proper to be insisted on, it is now; if ever it had any Weight or Force in it, it must now much more. The Apostle before my Text says, *It is a Shame to speak of those things which were done of the Pagans in secret*, Ver. 12. But alas! we may say, it is a Shame, it would wound, I would not say a sanctify'd, but a modest Ear, to mention the things that are done by such as call themselves Christians, too too openly; we have added new, and to this Nation unknown Abominations, to our old ones; and we have in a manner extinguish'd the Scandal of our former Provocations, not by reforming, but out-doing them. Good God! What will the End of these things be? What Tears? what Prayers? what Circumspection? what Diligence can be enough, if we have any Compassion for our Nation, or any Concern for ourselves? Supposing you now in some degree convinc'd and mov'd, I come to,

III. The

III. The last thing propos'd; to give you some Advice, for the better enabling you to practise the Duty of my Text; in which I shall follow the Apostle, who in the Context prescribes these Rules.

I. Shun, as an Infection, all those Errors which subvert the Faith and Morals of the Gospel. *Let no Man deceive you, says the Apostle, ver. 6. with vain Words; for because of these things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience.* If the Foundation be destroy'd, the Superstructure can never stand; if the Articles of our Faith be undermin'd, it will be very easy to extirpate Holiness and Virtue with them. I think there is no one thing presents us with a more threatening Prospect, than that Latitude which is now so much affected in the Doctrines of Faith; that Indifference which Men express for the Truths of God, and those immoral Principles which are every Day advanc'd. If you desire to be sav'd; if you have any Tenderness for a sinful, and therefore soon like to be a miserable People, *bold fast the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*; employ your uttermost Care to fix and settle your Belief on Gospel Grounds; watch over, and instruct

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your Families; discourage and oppose heartily whatever Attempts to weaken the Authority of Revelation, or to defile our Faith by Innovations, or the Purity of our Morals by Sensuality.

2. Shun, as much as in you lies, the Acquaintance and Conversation of vicious and ill Men, but much more avoid the least Communication in their Vices, by countenancing or conniving at them. *Ver. 7. Be not Partakers with them.* And *ver. 11. Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Workers of Darkneſs, but rather reprove them.* It ſeems, I confeſs, very ſtrange and unaccountable to me, that a Chriſtian, a Child of God, and a Diſciple of Jeſus, ſhould be fond of the Company of thoſe who are Enemies to God, and Obſtructers of the Kingdom of our Lord, and Blaſphemers of his Doctrines. It ſeems ſtrange to me, that a Mind enlighten'd and purify'd by the Spirit and Word of God, ſhould take any Pleaſure in that Converſation which tends to the Diſhonour of our Lord, and miniſters not Grace, but Poiſon. If this Advice of the Apoſtle could find any Regard or Reſpect amongſt us, we ſhould ſoon ſee an End of many Practices which tend very much to debauch the Nation; Play-Houſes, at leaſt till reform'd, would

would be forsaken by all of Modesty and Character, if not by all of Quality; infamous Women would be discountenanc'd and abandon'd; Virtue and God's Blessing would be more consider'd than Wealth in the Choice of those that are to be Companions of our Lives and Fortunes; dissolute Persons would in effect be excommunicated from the Intimacy of sincere Christians; the Modest and Well-dispos'd would be out of the reach of their Infection; and by this means the Plague that is kindled amongst us would be stop'd.

3. Preserve and increase diligently the Tendernefs of Conscience; this is what *St. Paul* means, *ver. 10. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*; and *ver. 11. Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is*; i. e. let your Souls be daily more and more possess'd with a lively Sense of the Majesty and Purity of God, of the Beauty and Reward of Holiness, and of the Danger and Deformity of Sin; the Conscience cannot have too nice, too quick a Sense of these things; whatever blunts or abates it, is an Enemy to the Peace and Perfection of a Christian, and will by degrees destroy even its Sincerity, and usher in Sin and Death; but if we preserve and improve this, we shall not only

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shun Evil, but every Appearance of it; we shall do what is good, and follow after what is best; our Minds shall be establish'd in the Peace of God; our Virtues shall not only be sincere and solid, but bright and sparkling; we shall be instrumental to give a Check to Sin, to promote the Honour of God, and the Salvation of our Brethren; and when we have pass'd thro' the Troubles and Temptations of a sinful World, we shall rest for ever in the Bosom of our Lord. *To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c.*



S E R-



SERMON XIII.

Of HUMILITY.

Preach'd before the Queen, May 15. 170³₄.

ROM. XII. 10.

In Honour preferring one another.

I Do not doubt but the Filthiness of the Flesh has been attack'd this Lent with due Warmth and Force, and yet it is certain that the Filthiness of the Spirit, however it comes to escape better, as generally it does, is no less dishonourable to God and pernicious to Man; and if our Zeal against any Sin be the more just and necessary, the more prevalent and the further extended it is, it is plain that Pride and Ambition are almost as widely diffus'd and spread as Sensuality; there is no Place where it does not enter, I wish I could say where it does not reign; there is no Condition, no State of Life which is not liable to it; it makes its Abode in Courts and Cottages; Princes are not above it, nor the meanest of the People beneath it; and what

Wonder, when Angels fell by it, and the poor Disciples of our humble Master were not free from it, witness their Disputes and Contentions who should be uppermost. To answer therefore fully the Design of Lent, we must endeavour to root out Pride and Ambition as well as Sensuality, and to advance Humility as well as Abstinence; and this is that which the Text aims at, *in Honour preferring one another.*

The first thing I am to do is to shew you in a word or two what Humility, what Pride and Ambition is, that it may the better appear afterwards what it is I dissuade you from or exhort you to. Humility then consists, first, in a mean, *i. e.* a just Opinion of our selves, call'd by our Lord, *Lowliness of Heart, and Poverty of Spirit*; and by St. Paul, ver. 3. *the thinking soberly of our selves, and not more highly than we ought to think*; the Fruit of this is Peace and Rest in ourselves, Meekness, Gentleness, Patience towards others; and in the Life to come the Kingdom of God. Next it consists in the Modesty and Moderation of our Desires, with respect to those things which are generally admir'd and valu'd in the World; that is what the Apostle enjoins, ver. 16. *Mind not high things*; the Effects of this are, Thankfulness to God, Joy for the Good of our Neighbour,

Neighbour, Contentment in our Condition, and a chearful Resignation of ourselves and all we have to God ; lastly, in such a Deportment as will naturally flow from that Frame and Disposition of Mind which I have described to you, a Deportment neither proud nor servile, neither rude nor flattering ; but above all, a Deportment which shews that the humble Man takes more Pleasure in doing his Duty than in the Honour and Respect of the World.

To this purpose are the Words of our Lord, *Matth, xxiii.* speaking of the proud Scribes and Pharisees ; *All their Works they do for to be seen of Men ; they make broad their Phylacteries, and enlarge the Borders of their Garments, and love the uppermost Rooms at Feasts, and the chief Seats in the Synagogues, and Greetings in the Markets ; and to be call'd of Men Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye call'd Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are Brethren. And call no Man Father upon Earth, for one is your Father which is in Heaven. Neither be ye called Masters, for one is your Master, even Christ ; but he that is greatest among you shall be your Servant ; and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* After this short Account of Humility, it is needless to say any thing of Pride and

and Ambition, which are a direct Contradiction to it. The

First thing couch'd or suppos'd in the Text is, that Christians may, nay ought, to give one another outward Testimonies of their mutual Esteem and Respect. Honour regards not merely our Opinion, but Behaviour; *honour the King, honour thy Father and thy Mother, honour all Men*, and such like Expressions in Scripture, do undoubtedly import as well an outward Reverence as inward Esteem; they are therefore certainly in the wrong, and fall foul upon Scripture as well as good Manners, who make Rudeness a Part of their Religion, and instead of honouring all Men, honour none.

This levelling Behaviour confounds that Distinction, Order and Beauty which the Providence of God has, for wise and great Reasons, undoubtedly introduc'd into the World, bereaves Virtue of one considerable Motive, the Honour and Esteem of the Wise and Good, and in a great degree overthrows that very Humility which it makes Profession of, and would be thought to contend for; for where there is no room left for any outward Testimonies of Respect, there is none neither for any of Humility; in a word, it is ridiculous to think that our Behaviour may not correspond

respond with the Sense of our Minds, and that tho' it be not only lawful, but our Duty to have an Esteem and Respect for one another, yet it is a Sin to testify this by those outward Marks, and innocent ones too, which are generally agreed on. It is scarce worth the while to take notice here of the Objections rais'd from those Passages in Scripture, *Salute no Man by the Way: Be not ye call'd Rabbi, Rabbi, &c.* for whoever shall read the Places will soon see, that in the former our Saviour minds the Twelve, whom he then sent forth before his Face, of the Importance of their Business, and with what Diligence and Earnestness they were to prosecute it; in the latter he commands his Disciples not to imitate the Scribes and Pharisees, not to be proud and ambitious, fond of Honour and Greatness, mindless of Duty and Conscience.

There is a second thing which I cannot forbear taking notice of, tho' it be only to be inferr'd from the Conjunction of Charity and Humility in the Text, because if reduc'd to Practice it would be the most effectual Cure of our greatest Evils, I mean our Divisions; it is this, that *Humility* does powerfully dispose and incline the Minds of Men to *Charity*, maintain and support it where it is, and is the best Means to restore it where it is lost.

This Observation may be confirm'd from the Conduct of our Lord and Master, *John* xiii. Our Saviour being ready to depart, and designing to recommend *Charity* to his Disciples in his last Words (*Charity*, the most comprehensive and the most perfect of all the Graces of the Gospel; *Charity*, the Source and Spring, nay, the very Life and Soul of all great and good Actions; *Charity*, in a word, the Essence and Ornament of Christianity) did well know that this was too high a Lesson for them to learn, unless their Minds were first dispos'd and qualify'd for it by another Virtue, that is, *Humility*; *Humility*, which is the first and last Round in *Jacob's* Ladder, and maintains the Intercourse between God and Man, for by this Man ascends up to Heaven, and by this God descends down to Earth; *Humility*, the Guard and Bulwark of all our other Graces; *Humility*, the Friend of human Peace, Security, and Concord, and the most powerful Antidote of all Discontent and Hatred, which commonly flow from Pride, Arrogance, and Ambition. Tho' therefore he had at first carefully laid this Foundation-Stone, and begun his Sermon on the Mount with *Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God*; tho' he had laid hold on all Occasions to recommend and endear this

Virtue

Virtue to them both by his Doctrine and Example, and tho' he had ever discountenanc'd and reprov'd all Ambition in them, and earnestly exhorted them to become as little Children, and tread in his Steps, yet he was desirous at this time to enforce this Duty more effectually than ever, if it might be; and because illustrious Examples do more easily make their way into the Heart, and make more deep and lasting Impressions upon the Affections and Memories than any Precept, he resolv'd to give them one in his own Person; and therefore *after Supper, rising up and laying aside his Garments*, and humbling himself into the Dress and Posture of a Servant, he began *to wash his Disciples Feet, and wipe them with the Towel with which he was girt*. He, the Son of God, the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, his Disciples mean and inconsiderable Men, whether we regard their Fortune or Education; and afterwards resuming an Air of holy Majesty, which he was wont to wear, he concludes with this passionate and moving Application: *Know ye what it is I have done unto you? Ye call me Lord and Master, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master have wash'd your Feet, ye also ought to wash one anothers Feet; for I have given you*
an

an Example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Ah! what a Paradise would the World be were all that call themselves Christians led by this Spirit, and would they all follow this Example! To contribute to which what I can, I proceed to the main thing contain'd in the Text, namely,

3. It is the Duty of Christians to vie with one another, not in Pride and Ambition, but Lowliness and Humility; to excite you to which, I will first shew you the Unreasonableness and Folly of Pride and Ambition, and then convince you of the Obligations you lie under to Humility.

The former will easily appear from two Considerations. 1. Pride is a Vice very unbeseeming Man, whether we consider our *Nature* or our *State*; if our Nature, what ground can that Being have for Arrogance or Confidence whose Foundation is in the Dust, which is crush'd before the Moth, which may without any too humble Figure or extravagant Exaggeration *say unto Corruption thou art my Father, and to the Worm thou art my Mother and my Sister?* Job xvii. To what purpose should Man fantastically enlarge his Desires, when a very little and cheap Provision will satisfy the Appetites of his Nature? How ridiculously does he, whose Life is but a Span long,

long, extend his Designs and Projects to an imaginary Immortality? To what purpose does this little thing, who can enjoy but a very little, and for a little Moment, embroil this short Life by proud and endless Contentions? Were it not wonderfully ridiculous should a Croud of Emmets, quitting the Care of necessary Provision, fall into Juncto's and Cabals, then form themselves into Parties and Factions, and at last rang'd in numerous Bodies, decide in many a bloody Field this mighty Quarrel who should be uppermost, who should possess the better Share of their little Ant-hill? Or if a swarm of Flies, who cannot probably out-live the next Night's nipping Cold, should form Designs of Greatness and lasting Empire? Much such a thing are the proud Contentions and ambitious Anxieties of mortal Man about these temporal Things, nay, infinitely worse, because of Eternity and a Judgment to come.

Nor is Pride less befeeming our State than Nature. God, partly for his own Glory, partly for our Trial, delights one while to depress the Mighty, and another while to exalt the Mean; now he stains the Pride of Glory, and anon gives a surprizing Lustre to the Obscure and Base; there is a continual Circulation of Good and Evil, and in this Wheel of Providence

dence the Spoke that is up to-day is down to-morrow ; there is nothing firm, nothing steady, nothing that the Mind of a reasonable Man can rest it self upon. Will it rest on Power ? Alas ! a little Spark will kindle and blow up this, and it is dissolved and dissipated in a Moment, tho' with hideous Noise and mighty Ruins scatter'd round about. On Wealth ? This if it be bound and fetter'd, is good for nothing, and serves only to create the Owner Care and Fear, and Enmity and Danger ; if set free, it soon makes itself Wings and flies away. Honour is too thin and airy to build any thing on it, the least Blast of Envy or Ingratitude defaces and disfigures all its Beauty ; nay, nothing is more doubtful and uncertain than the thing it self ; for Actions, like the Objects of the Eye, appear very differently, according to the Light they are plac'd in ; how foolish then and unreasonable is Pride, when it has no better Foundation than these things to stand on ? How foolish and unreasonable is Ambition, when there is nothing to reward its Toils and Hazards, its Fears and Jealousies, but a worthless, uncertain Trifle ?

2. Many and great are the Mischiefs that attend Ambition. *After Pride, says Solomon, comes Shame, Prov. xi. 2. And Prov. xvi. 8.*
Pride

Pride goes before Destruction, and an haughty Spirit before a Fall. It is very seldom that he who labours to be the Envy, does not become the Contempt of others; nothing exposes a vain Man more than his own Vanity; the ambitious Man is often crush'd by his own Weight; vast and unweildy Designs defeat themselves, and he who grasps at all, loses all; and what is always to be observ'd, no one rises with such general Discontent, or falls with such general Obloquy as the proud Man; and it is well when that is the worst that befalls him, for nothing is so likely to cure this despicable Wretch as Baffles and Disgraces. It were well, I say, if the Evils that attend Pride were confin'd to the proud Man himself, but Experience tells us that *Solomon's* Observation is constantly true, *the proud Man stirreth up Strife*, Prov. xxviii. 25. the reason is plain, not only because he will rule, but rule alone; he bears no Rival in Power, Honour or Profit; nothing is enough for himself, nor too little for others; there may be therefore some that fear him, some that depend on him (unhappy they that do so) but there can be none that love him; nothing, in a word, is more unso- ciable and turbulent, more fierce and wilful, more restless and revengeful than Ambition; and nothing is more fit nor more prone fatal-

ly to embroil both publick States and private Fortunes. It is in this sort of Sinners above all that the Words of the Prophet are verif'd, *The Wicked is like a troubled Sea when it cannot rest; whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt: There is no Peace saith my God to the Wicked,* Isa. lvii. 20. Ah! might it therefore please God, as he has communicated to Princes a Ray of his Power, so to communicate to them also a Ray of his Wisdom, I mean the Gift of discerning Spirits, that such restless and violent ones as these might never dare to approach their Throne, but their Favours might descend upon the Meek and Humble, if such be to be found. I have done with the first Part of the Doctrine last laid down, and will proceed to a Subject I can discourse of with more Pleasure; that is, *Humility*, to which I will exhort you by Arguments drawn from the Example of our Lord, which are these: *First*, his Humility shews us what Engagements we lie under to it, since we profess ourselves his Disciples and Followers. *Secondly*, his Humility teaches what it is the Honour and Greatness of a Christian consists in. *Thirdly*, the Reward with which God crown'd his Humility cannot but encourage us to imitate it.

First,

First, We profess our selves to be the Disciples of Christ. Now to be a Disciple is to embrace the Truths he taught, to imitate the Virtues he practis'd, and to be animated and supported by the same Hopes he was. Now what the Doctrine, Life and Hope of our Lord was, none can be ignorant of; it was all Humility. If we enquire after his Hope, he himself will tell us, *My Kingdom is not of this World; the Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head.* If after his Behaviour, *I have been among you as one that serves; the Son of Man came not to be ministred to, but to minister; I seek not my own Glory.* St. Paul has set forth this in the most lively and moving manner that so many Words possibly could, *Phil. ii. Who being in the Form of God, and thinking it no Robbery to be equal with God; yet made himself of no Reputation; and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men: And being found in fashion as a Man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the Death of the Cross.* If, lastly, we demand an Instance of his Doctrine in this Point, to what I have already produc'd may be added his Reproof of St. Peter, when he look'd upon this his Humility as unbecoming the Greatness of the Son of God;

Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an Offence to me, thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of Men. His Correction of the Ambition of the Sons of Zebedee, and the rest of the Disciples: *Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise Authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant.* In short, he exhorted all who would enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, *to humble themselves, and become as little Children;* and plainly tells all, that unless they would deny themselves, and take up their Cross and follow him, they could not be his Disciples. What Inference think you ought we to make from all this, but that of St. Paul? *Let the same Mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.* But, alas! how far are we from this? Who among us dare say that this is the Copy which he writes after? Where is the Servant that would not be above his Lord? the Disciple that would not be greater than his Master? Who is there who, should God call him to it, would not blush at the Form of a Servant, and fly as from Shame and Calamity, from the Fortune our dear Lord made his Choice? Ah! it is too plain Christ

did not more industriously decline and slight these outward things than we do seek them; he did not more diligently and constantly pursue true Glory and Happiness in Virtue and Obedience, than we do false Shews and Appearances of both in Vanity, Sin and Folly; and in one word, scarce was his Humility more visible and conspicuous than our Pride, Vanity, and Ambition. Is it thus we make good our Engagement? Is it thus we adorn our Profession? Unhappy Times, when nothing is more unlike Christ than they who call themselves Christians; when nothing is more unlike our Master than they who call themselves his Disciples. But all this happens in great measure from mistaken Notions of things, and therefore I proceed,

Secondly, To shew you, that it is from the Life of Christ we are to learn what the true Glory and true Greatness of a Christian consists in. The *Gentiles* one while indeed talk'd much of Glory, and we talk now sometimes much of Honour, but their Glory was a mere Devil transform'd into an Angel of Light, it was Ambition clad in false but dazzling Characters; and Honour with us is as different from true Greatness as the Wit of the Age from the Wisdom of the Gospel; the one is all Tinsel, the other pure Ore; the one flashes

and glitters, the other has solid Worth and intrinsic Weight in it; it is from our Lord we must form true Idea's of these things; it is said of him indeed when he wrought his first Miracle, that he manifested forth his Glory; and peradventure all would be very willing to partake with him in this sort of Glory, for here it signifies Power; but I question whether we should imitate him in the Use of it, or whether we should not rather, as his Disciples were forward to have done when yet they knew not the Spirit of their Master, command Fire to come down from Heaven to destroy our Enemies, that is, one another. But there is another Notion of Glory to be found in the Life of our Master, which alone we can and ought to imitate: *And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us; that is, in the Comment of St. Paul, He who was in the Form of God, and thought it no Robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no Reputation, took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men.* It follows in St. John, *And we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten Son of God, full of Grace and Truth.* Abstracting then from his Miracles, amidst all the mean Circumstances of his Fortune, Truth and Wisdom crown'd him with Majesty; Virtue and Innocence gave

gave him an Ascendant and Authority; Goodness and Charity, Condescension and Humility, render'd him truly Great; and no wonder, if from these things as well as others, the Disciples concluded that he was the only begotten Son of God, since the Glory of God himself consists in Goodness and Mercy; and those Words of our Lord, *And now, Father, I have glorify'd thee upon Earth*, are to be interpreted especially of his revealing those divine Perfections more fully to the World. From all this it is plain, what the Greatness, what the Honour of a Disciple of Christ must consist in, namely, in favouring the things that be of God, not of Man; in not doing his own Will, nor seeking his own Glory, but that of God; in distinguishing himself, if he can, to the Praise of his Redeemer from the rest of Mankind, by Grace and Truth, by Wisdom and Virtue, by Goodness and Charity, by Meekness and Humility; and whenever Conscience and Duty call him to it, by despising the Shame and enduring the Cross, slighting the Calumnies and vanquishing the Malice of ill Men, in order to serve them, in order to promote the Glory of God here, and to secure his own hereafter. Religion then, as you see, does not extirpate our Passions, but purify and regulate them, and fix and deter-

mine them on a fit Object; it allows us Ambition, but it must be for that which is worthy of it; *Covet earnestly the best Gifts.* It allows us to vie with one another, to contend for Pre-eminence and Superiority, but it must be in *the Works of Faith, the Labours of Love, and the Patience of Hope.* *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant,* Matth. xx. It allows us to love and seek Honour, *Phil.* iv. 8. but it must be that which consists in the things that are *true*, that are *pure*, that are *just*, that are *lovely*; finally, it allows us to glory, but it must not be in Power, in Wealth, or in the Wisdom of this World; but he that glories must glory in the Lord, in the Redemption he has wrought for us, and in the Conformity of our Understanding and Will to his Doctrine and his Life: This is the Honour, this the Greatness that Christianity admits of, this is the Ambition which it exhorts and encourages us to; but so far is it from countenancing any other, that when the Joy of the Disciples, upon the Subjection of the Devils to them, appear'd to be mix'd with some little Tincture of Vanity, our Lord takes them down, and humbles this little Honour: *In this rejoice not, because the Spirits are subject unto you; but*

but rather rejoice because your Names are written in Heaven, Luke x. 20. Ah! had these Notions of Honour and Greatness but once taken a thorough Possession of our Hearts, and were we but once throughly convinc'd that the Notions which the World forms of these things are mere Dreams, Cheats, and Delusions, what Wonders would this one Truth alone atchieve among us! how soon would the very Names of Parties and Factions be forgotten! our Envy and Emulation be converted into Love and Joy, and all our Contentions end in this one blessed one, who should do most for Religion, for his Country, for one another! But ah! when shall the Minds of Men be really possess'd of these Persuasions! When shall those happy Times be, when the Truths of the Gospel shall triumph over the Delusions of Hell, the Politicks of this World, and the false and foolish Notions of proud and ambitious Men! When shall it once be that this shall be more than Talk, Speculation, and Amusement! Let us try how far the last Argument can affect us.

Thirdly, The Example of Christ teaches us how great a Reward is reserv'd for Humility in another World. Because our Lord humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the Death of the Cross, therefore, as St. Paul tells us,

us, *Phil. ii.* God highly exalted him, and gave him a Name which is above every Name; that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth; and that every Tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father. This was the Prospect that made our Lord despise that other, when from the Top of the Mountains the Devil presented to his View *all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them.* This was that which his Soul thirsted after, when he had well nigh finish'd his State of Humiliation upon Earth. *And now, Father, glorify thou me.* It was this Joy that was set before him that enabled him to *endure the Cross and despise the Shame.* And this is what Christ has promis'd in a proper Degree and Measure to all his Disciples, as an Encouragement to this Duty, *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;* that is, he that imitates his Humility shall share with him in his Glory. *Fear not, little Flock,* you that are little in the Eyes of the World, and less in your own, *it is your Father's Good-will to give you a Kingdom.* Ah! had we but a firm Belief and a lively Notion of these things, what a Dream, what a Cheat would this World, and the Greatness of it, appear to us from this Height of Faith and Hope!

Hope! just such a thing as it did to our Lord from the Height of the Mountains! how little should we struggle to get above others! How little be concern'd who got above us! How calmly should we suffer the Neglect or Contempt of the World! and how far should we be from vain and ambitious Designs and Projects! Our Business would not be then to undermine and supplant one another, but to secure the Peace and Tranquillity of our own Bosoms; our great Aim would not then be Port, and State, and Grandeur, but to become all glorious within; and whereas now our Time and Strength, our Vigour and Fortune, are all wasted upon I know not what mean and despicable Projects, they would then be laid out upon this one wise and great Design, the acquiring the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteousness thereof. And oh! how should we then even long to dislodge out of this Tabernacle of Clay, to leave this indeed comparatively dark and dirty Planet, and pass into the Region of Light and Bliss, of Beauty, Glory, and Perfection, into the Court of God, into the Joy of our Master!

*To which Place God of his Mercy bring
us all.*

F I N I S.





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